THE UNFETTERED WORD

J. D. JONES M.A., B.D.

Alfred Martin '57

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A SERIES OF READINGS FOR THE QUIET HOUR

BY

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To

MY FRIEND

C. W. T.

WHO HAS FOR MANY YEARS PAST
ENCOURAGED ME IN EVERY
GOOD WORD AND WORK

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THE UNFETTERED WORD

THE CITY WITH TWELVE GATES

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, . . . having twelve gates, . . . on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.—Rev. xxi. 10, 12.

The twelve gates suggest to me this truth, that men enter the kingdom *by different ways*. All roads lead to London, we say. There are scores of ways into the metropolis. You may enter it from any number of different points. So these twelve gates suggest that there are many ways into the city. Starting from various points these roads converge on the heavenly Zion and meet there. Men may travel different ways and reach the same destination at the last. This is a truth we are apt to forget. We are prone to think *our* way is the only way. But there are twelve gates to the city, and men who have not travelled an inch of road together may meet at the throne.

Men find Christ by many *different experiences*. The spiritual history of no two people is exactly alike. If the spiritual history of all Christian people could be set down for us to see, what infinite variety of

religious experience there would appear! In what a multitude of ways, it would be discovered, we had been brought to Christ! But the danger we are always in is that of making one type of experience the rule, and thinking that no one who has not been through it can be soundly converted and truly saved! For instance, a great many men's religious life has begun with an overwhelming and subduing conviction of sin. In the great Evangelical Revival, John Wesley made a point of beginning his sermons with what the Scotch would call "Law-work." He preached sin and its penalty and exhorted his hearers to flee from the wrath to come. Speaking to an England that was sunk in gross vice and sin, John Wesley's ministry was an urgent and vehement call to repentance. He invited his congregations to come to Christ, *viâ* the penitent form, and thousands and tens of thousands did so and found life to their souls. But we have no right to make the penitent form a *sine qua non*. We have no right to say that it is the only way into the kingdom. Indeed, I will make bold to say there are many who ought *not* to enter the kingdom in that way! We have a right to expect heart-breaking penitence, a tremendous convulsion of the nature, from the kind of people to whom John Wesley preached, men who had fallen low in vice and sin; but surely we have no right to expect it from children of Christian homes who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Conversion is one way to the city; confirmation is another. You see the point I am trying to make. Men may get hold of the same

boon by different methods. "With a great price bought I this freedom," said Claudius Lysias to Paul about his Roman citizenship. "But I," answered the Apostle, "was free born." They enjoyed the same privilege, but the one had received it by purchase, the other by inheritance. And it may be like that with the kingdom. Our Lord Himself has said so. He has told us in His parables of the Treasure and the Pearl, that one man may only find salvation after long and painful search; another may, so to speak, stumble across it, and find it without difficulty of any kind. There are men who only find their peace and rest after passing through seas of trouble and dark nights of doubt—men like F. W. Robertson and G. J. Romanes. They enter by the northern gate. There are others who are, as Mr. Gladstone said of Arthur Hallam, "naturally Christian." They enter by the eastern or southern gate. Paul found Christ through that blinding lightning flash that laid him low on the way to Damascus. Timothy found his way into the kingdom through the teaching of his mother and grandmother. There is no one stereotyped method of finding salvation. There is no one and invariable type of experience. There are diversities of operations, but the same spirit. As Christina Rossetti puts it:—

> Home by different ways. Yet all,
> Homeward bound thro' prayer and praise,
> Young with old and great with small,
> Home by different ways;

for the City of God has twelve gates, on the east

three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

And may I add, as a kindred and almost parallel thought, that men come into the kingdom, not only by many experiences, but *out of many Churches*. We believe that in every communion there are those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and that out of every Church men will find their way to the city. Let no one deceive you into believing there is only one gate into the city—whether that gate be the Roman gate, or the Anglican gate, or the Plymouth Brethren gate. There are twelve gates! There is no one divinely-appointed Church which is the sole channel of grace! Out of all the Churches God's redeemed will come. There are some people so made that they seek an external authority on which to lean. Such will always seek the Roman Church. Out of that Church faithful souls will come. And there are some who love the stately ritual and order of our own Established Church. Out of that Church many faithful and loving souls will come. And there are some who prefer to worship God "with the thinnest of human veils between," who find their souls' congenial home in these simple Free Churches of ours, and out of our Churches faithful and devoted souls will come. And that will be one of the great joys of heaven! It may be mingled with a little shame, perhaps, that we did not recognise one another as fellow citizens down here! But it will be one of the joys of heaven, nevertheless, that we shall meet in the city men who travelled by other ways. We shall meet Bernard

and Francis, and à Kempis and Xavier. We shall meet George Herbert and Bishop Andrewes, and William Law and Bishop Ken. We shall meet John Knox and Samuel Rutherford, and John Bunyan and Richard Baxter. They travelled by different ways. They entered by different gates. But we shall all meet before the throne.

> Dear fellow citizens they greet
> Of every age, of every clime ;
> Far dwellers in one city meet,
> Strange voices raise one song sublime.

The communion of saints is marred and broken here on earth by sectarian divisions and narrownesses. But the remembrance of the twelve gates will preserve us from intolerance and uncharitableness. Romanists, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists—we may travel by different ways, but we shall sit down together in the kingdom of God.

THE STORM

And leaving the multitude, they take Him with them, even as He was, in the boat.—MARK iv. 36.

WE see in this story the *seemingly heedless Christ.* It was fine when the disciples took Him, even as He was, in the boat, and started out on their sail across the lake. Under ordinary circumstances, a sail of an hour and a half would have seen them across. But it was to be no swift and safe passage this time. The Lake of Galilee is notorious for its sudden furious squalls. The commentators will tell you that its position, in a kind of deep gorge, below the level of the sea, and with the snowy slopes of Hermon not far away, accounts for its bad reputation in this respect. And one of these sudden and furious squalls struck the lake on this particular night. "There ariseth," says Mark, "a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling." You may be sure that the disciples did their best to keep their little boat afloat, for they were expert sailors. But in spite of all their efforts, the storm was getting the better of them. "The boat was now filling." The furious waves dashed into their little craft and a watery grave seemed to stare them in the face. And all the time, while they were straining every nerve to ward off the threatening danger, all the time that they

were fighting for bare life, Jesus was asleep in the stern, seemingly quite heedless of and indifferent to their troubles. At last they waked Him up, and you can catch in their words the accents of reproach of men who thought they had been neglected in their hour of need: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" The Master sleeping on, while His disciples were battling for life—here you have what to all appearances looks like a *heedless Christ.* And there are times when it does seem as if Jesus did not care. Listen to this verse: "Behold, a Canaanitish woman came out from these borders, and cried, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." There you have a poor soul in sore trouble. Of course Jesus will return to her appeal a swift and gracious answer. "But He answered her not a word." That looks like a heedless Christ. Or read the story of that other storm in which the disciples one night found themselves. They had left Jesus on the land, while they themselves set sail for Capernaum. And once again the tempest overtook them. The sea was rising because of a great wind that blew. They longed for Christ and prayed for Christ. But this is what I read: "It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them." That looks like a heedless Christ. Listen again to this: "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. The sisters therefore sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Of course, Jesus will hurry back to Bethany on the receipt of that

news, with the pathetic appeal implied in it, for Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus. But this is what I read: "When therefore He heard that he was sick, He abode at that time two days in the place where He was." What do you suppose the broken-hearted sisters thought of Him when the days passed, and He did not come? Do you not think they must have thought Him a heedless Christ?

So there come times to us when the storms of doubt and trouble and sorrow beat down upon us, and we are in sore and dire trouble, and Jesus makes no sign of coming to our help. We cry, and He does not seem to answer. We fight for very life, and He sleeps on apparently indifferent to our fate, until we are tempted to think that He really does not care. But the *heedlessness is never more than in seeming.* "Master," said these panic-stricken disciples at last, roughly awakening Him out of His sleep, "carest thou not that we perish?" And Jesus was amazed at their panic. "Why are ye fearful?" He said. "Have ye not yet faith?" Not yet? They were slow followers. The Master had given them proof after proof of His power. They had witnessed His authority over human disease and evil spirits. They had seen Him rescue this person and that from danger and death. The knowledge that Christ was with them in the boat ought to have been a sufficient safeguard against fear. They might have known no harm could befall them. Christ was not *heedless.* His presence—though He seem silent—is the pledge of

our safety. Read the story of the Canaanitish woman to its close. This is how it ends: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was healed from that hour." She knew when she found her daughter sane and well that Christ was no heedless Christ. Read the story of that other storm to its close, and this is how it ends: "When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they behold Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat." He had been watching all the while, and at the hour of need He came. When they found themselves safely at the land whither they were going, those disciples knew that Christ was no heedless Christ. Read the story of the Bethany sisters to its close, and this is how it ends: "When He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." When they received their brother back again alive, Martha and Mary would know that Christ was not a heedless Christ. Read the story Mark tells here to its close, and this is how it ends: "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Before they reached the other side these disciples had learned the lesson that Jesus was not a heedless Christ. He never is a heedless Christ. "He hears thy sighs, He counts thy tears, He shall lift up thy head." He seems to be asleep sometimes and to be indifferent to our distress, but He is watching all the time, and at the fitting moment He will come with help and succour. And be quite sure of this, that to have Christ with you is a pledge and absolute assurance of safety. "No one shall pluck them out

of My hand." Have Him in your life's vessel, and the storm is yet to be born that can overwhelm your little bark. "Row on, row on," cried Julius Cæsar to his boatmen as they were crossing the Adriatic in the teeth of a furious storm, "you are bearing Cæsar and his fortunes." Well, I do not know that bearing "Cæsar and his fortunes" was any guarantee of safety. But if we are bearing Christ we need not fear. "With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm."

MARAH

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.—EXOD. xv. 23, etc.

AND Marah, you will notice, with its bitter waters and its open murmurings, came almost immediately after the Red Sea, and the wonderful deliverance and the psalm of victory. The juxtaposition of the two events makes the transition from the one to the other the more startling. I look just above this verse, and these are the words I read: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." What a day that was in the camp of the Israelites! How they exulted and rejoiced on that never-to-be-forgotten day! When they emerged safely from the sea and saw Pharaoh's pursuing hosts engulfed in its waters, they made sure that their troubles were all at an end, and that it would be roses, roses, roses with them all the way to Canaan, and they danced and sang for sheer gladness of heart. But the very next thing we read is this: "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter"!

From the Red Sea they passed on to Marah. The day of triumph was succeeded by a day of trouble. The day of rejoicing was succeeded by a day of murmuring and complaint. Exultation gave way to despondency and despair, and the people that danced and sang at the Red Sea, groaned in their deep disappointment when in their intolerable thirst they drew nigh to the waters of Marah and found they could not drink of them, for they were bitter.

The first thing I find in this passage is this,—I find in it an illustration of the *vicissitudes of life.* Life has been compared again and again to a journey. It is very much like the journey of these Israelites in that it is full of sudden and startling changes. We triumph one day, and are in despair the next. We bask in the sunshine one day, and are plunged in deep night the next. We sing and dance at the Red Sea one day, and we are ready to die by the bitter waters of Marah the next. We have our Red Sea days. Oliver Cromwell used to speak of the third of September as the day of his "crowning mercies," for it was on that day he fought and won the battles of Worcester and Dunbar, and it was on that same day in 1658 that he fought and won his last great fight and passed to his Lord to receive his crown of life. And in much the same way we have our days of crowning mercies, wedding days, birthdays, recovery days, days when some prize for which we had striven fell to our lot, days when the world to us is full of music and of song. But Marah, too—the place of bitter waters—is a station on our journey, and sooner or later we all of us come to it.

When sickness comes, when business fails, when husband or wife or child dies—then are we at Marah and we cannot drink, for the waters of Marah are bitter.

I am not going to discuss the problem of sorrow and trouble—beyond saying this, that Marah has its beneficent ends to serve. We often wish we could get through life without tasting life's bitterness, and yet, experience is daily teaching us that nothing is so perilous to a man's soul as continuous and unbroken prosperity! When our cousins from the Antipodes come to England the thing that charms them most is our English greenery. They fall in love with our green fields and velvet lawns. They have nothing of that kind in Australia, the perpetual sunshine of that great continent makes everything brown and parched and sere. To what does England owe its greenness and its beauty? To its rains. Now, rain is not exactly pleasant, but it keeps beautiful and green what would otherwise be parched and bare! And in exactly the same way the bitternesses of life, its sorrows and troubles, prevent the soul from becoming withered and shrivelled and barren! Perennial prosperity produces lean souls. Here are two verses from the Psalms which are experimentally true and which it would be well we should all of us lay to heart. This first: "He gave them the desire of their hearts and sent leanness into their souls." They enjoyed continual prosperity with the result that their souls became as withered and barren as the Australian desert. This is the second: "Because they have

no changes, therefore they fear not God." Because their career is one of uninterrupted success, therefore they fear not God, therefore they lose the sense of eternity, therefore all the highest and holiest emotions die out of their souls. And prosperity is purchased at far too high a price, when it means a perished and withered soul! No, it would not be well for us that it should be Red Sea with us all the time; Marah has also its ends to serve. It would not be well that it should be success and prosperity every day; days of disappointment and failure and loss have also their part to play. It is not in anger but in kindness that now and again God brings us to Marah.

> Thy chastisements are love—more deep
> They stamp the seal divine,
> And by a sweet compulsion keep
> Our spirits nearer Thine.

As I said, I am not intent upon discussing the problem of trouble and sorrow, or of justifying the ways of God to man, all I want to do just now is to ask you to notice how in this swift removal from the Red Sea to Marah, from gladness to trouble, we have a picture of life. Life is like the chequer board, says Omar Khayyám. It is a strange blending of sorrow and song, of sunshine and rain, of laughter and tears. And oftentimes Marah succeeds the Red Sea, trouble follows rejoicing with startling suddenness. Again and again men pass at a bound from the heights of bliss to the very depths of woe. Take the story of our Lord's life. I read about Him one day going into the water to be baptised of John,

and while He was being baptised the heavens opened and the Spirit as a dove descended upon Jesus Christ, and a voice came out of the heavens saying "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee am I well pleased." What a moment of rapture and bliss unspeakable that must have been! But what is it I read next? Listen—"Straightway the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and He was with the wild beasts." What a change was that—from the opened heavens and the vision of God, to the wilderness and Satan and the wild beasts! We turn to the last week of His life. On the Sunday Jesus rode in lowly pomp into Jerusalem, and the people in their enthusiasm spread branches of palms and even their own garments in the way as He passed, and cried "Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." But on the Friday of that very week the same streets of Jerusalem rang with the cruel cry of "Crucify Him!" and they nailed Him to the Cross on Calvary, hanging Him between two thieves. What a change was that—from the triumphant entry, to the bitter Cross! And similar changes come into the life of us all! Our sky changes in an hour! At one bound we pass from the Red Sea to Marah, and, as we know, many of us from experience, the waters of Marah are very bitter!

Robert Louis Stevenson says much in his writings about "the duty of being happy." "A happy man or woman," he says, "is a better thing to find than a five pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of

good will." And the doctrine he preached he bravely tried to carry out. Threatened as he was with consumption, doomed from youth to physical failure, he yet tried to turn to the world a smiling face. But in his Vailima letters to Colvin, in spite of himself, he cannot help now and again a sigh and a groan. When sickness assailed his home, when he felt the shadows of the prison house closing in upon him, even Stevenson found it hard to keep up his smile. I, too, believe in the duty of being happy. We are not to go muling and puling through life. At the same time it is no use to pretend that life is all sunshine and blue sky. And it's an ill business trying to carry to the world a sunny face when we carry in our bosom a broken heart. Moralists may preach as they please about the duty of being happy, but there come days to us in the course of life when we cannot laugh, when we cannot even smile, but when our hearts are filled with desolation and sorrow. "When we come to Marah—we cannot drink—for the waters of Marah are very bitter."

But there was an antidote for Marah. "And Moses cried unto the Lord, and the Lord shewed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet." And God provides still an antidote for Marah. He provides a remedy whereby the bitter shall become sweet. And that remedy is still—a Tree. It is the Cross on which the Son of God gave up His breath. The leaves of this Tree are for the healing of the nations. It can and does take the bitterness out of our sorrows. For what does

the Cross tell us? It tells us of One who loved us to the uttermost! It tells us that Love rules! It tells us that behind all the griefs and sorrows and pains of life, there stands One whose love can only be measured by the sacrifice of the Cross. The realization of this robs sorrow of its sting. "Here," says our hymn—in face of the Cross—"earth's bitter things grow sweet." Yes, here, and nowhere else. But here they do. "We know that all things work together for good," said one Apostle; he had cast the tree into the waters and they had grown sweet. "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth," said another Apostle; he had cast the tree into the waters and they had grown sweet. And the same tree can sweeten our Marahs for us. When we take to our hearts the message of the Cross we are able humbly and gratefully to believe that

All is right that seems most wrong,
If it be God's sweet will.

THINKING AND DOING

What think ye of Christ?—MATT. xxii. 42.
What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?
MATT. xxvii. 22.

COMPARING these two questions, I am impressed by by the fact, that it *is easier to form a correct opinion about Christ than it is to take up the right attitude towards Him.* It is much easier to think rightly about Christ than it is to act rightly by Him. I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not saying it is altogether easy even to think rightly about Jesus. Men were puzzled what to think of Him long ago. There was wide diversity of opinion about Him. You remember when Jesus asked His disciples what people thought of Him and who they thought He was, they replied "Some say, John the Baptist, some Elijah; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." The very variety of verdict shows that the people did not find it easy to make up their minds about Jesus Christ. The controversies of the early Church again, controversies that rent the Church in twain, raged for the most part round the question, "What think ye of Christ?" The early Christian theologians were sorely puzzled to account for the person of Jesus. I am not forgetting all this. I am not forgetting that to this day there are many men puzzled in similar fashion. They do

not know whether to think of Jesus as God or as Man. Nevertheless, while remembering all about the intellectual difficulties in conceiving of Jesus as God manifest in the flesh, I assert again it is much easier to think rightly about Jesus than it is to act rightly by Him.

Take this very man Pilate who is the author of the second question. I look through the story of his intercourse with Jesus and I find that Pilate had not much difficulty in *thinking* rightly about Him. I do not say that his ideas about Jesus would pass muster in a theological examination room. They were not up to the standard of the Nicene Creed. But it is quite obvious that Pilate had the right sort of conception of Jesus. He calls Christ a "righteous man." He said repeatedly, "I find no fault in Him." He recognised Him—not only as no criminal—but as a holy and sinless Person. What to think of Christ was easy enough—but what to do with Him was another matter.

Do you remember Munkacsy's great picture of "Christ before Pilate"? There is Jesus calm, majestic, with holy innocence stamped upon His brow; there is the bawling and howling mob clamouring for His blood; and there on the bench is Pilate with knit brow and troubled face, the very picture of hesitation and irresolution. He was trying to settle this question, "What shall I do unto Jesus who is called Christ?" He had settled the first question easily enough and settled it aright. But he found it terribly hard to answer the second, and when he did answer it he answered

it wrong. Put these two sentences of Pilate's side by side: "I find no fault in Him," "Take Him and crucify Him." And what do these two sentences preach but this, it is infinitely easier to think rightly of Jesus than it is to act rightly by Him?

Men find it so still. On the whole, I have no complaint to make about the *opinions* men hold of Jesus. I do not mean to say that they are all theologically orthodox and correct. But everybody practically gives Jesus first place to-day. Everybody admits He was the greatest, wisest, holiest Person who ever lived. My trouble is not with men's *opinions* about Jesus, but with their *practical attitude* towards Him. One of the Prime Ministers of the early part of the late Queen's reign was a most accomplished theologian. He knew exactly what to think of Christ. But he lived, as everyone knew, a notoriously shameful and vicious life. He united correct views about Jesus with a complete practical repudiation of Him. And that is what scores and hundreds and thousands of people are doing to-day. Their opinions are all right; their practical attitude is all wrong. They are ready enough to acknowledge Jesus as the perfect Man; many of them are ready to salute Him as Lord—but it is quite another thing obeying Him in their everyday life. They find it infinitely easier to *think* rightly about Him, than they do to *act* rightly by Him.

Thinking stands to doing in the relation of cause to effect, of the fountain to the stream. The condition of acting rightly by Christ is that we

should think rightly about Him. And yet while there can be no right doing without right thinking, it by no means follows that right thinking will issue in right doing. Man is not a piece of mechanism. He has a will—oftentimes a perverse and wicked will. And this perverse and wicked will often interferes to prevent the right thought having its proper result in the right act. "I see and approve the better," said the Latin poet, "but I follow the worse." He thought rightly—he acted wrongly. Since, then, it is possible for a man to think rightly of Jesus and yet act wrongly by Him, it becomes needful to insist upon it that it is the *attitude* and not the opinion that counts. Our Lord said so Himself again and again and again. "Not every one," He said on one occasion, "that saith to Me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." And He describes men coming up to Him and saying, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy name do many mighty works?" Nothing could have been more correct than the opinion these people had about Jesus. Notice, they even called Him "Lord." But their *practical attitude* was all wrong. And so Jesus replies to them, "I never knew you, depart from Me all ye that work iniquity." Take this very man Pilate. His opinions about Christ are all right. He pronounced Christ to have "no fault." But do we canonise Pilate because his opinions were all right? No, history has judged Pilate not by his opinions but by his actions.

Pilate's place is settled for ever not by what he thought of Christ, but by what he did with Christ. "Crucified"—that is how this man is remembered —"under Pontius Pilate." It is not his pious opinion—but his sinful deed that decides his destiny.

I need not multiply illustrations, but there the truth stands—it is not what you think of Christ but what you do with Him that decides your place and settles your destiny. It is not your opinion but your practical attitude that counts. And when it comes to practical attitude I confess myself concerned. For I cannot blind myself to the obvious fact that there are numbers of people whose opinions are as correct as opinions can very well be, whose practical attitude is all wrong. They acknowledge Christ as God's Son and then neglect and ignore Him in life. They call Him "Lord, Lord," and then repudiate His authority. You have heard of the *Rois Fainéants* in France—"the Puppet Kings." The name was given to the later kings of the Merovingian dynasty. They were only sham kings. They were kings who were not allowed to rule. They were given the royal title and men paid a kind of ceremonial respect to them. But they had no power. The country yielded them no obedience. The people gave them the royal title, but none of the royal authority. They called them "Lord"—but gave their service and duty to another. And that is how multitudes treat Jesus. They call Him "Lord." They give Him the royal title. They say He is their King. But He is only a *roi fainéant*—a puppet king. He has the name and not the

substance of royalty. For He does not rule. Men pay respect to Him but do not obey Him. There are numbers of people in our midst who are ready to say "Lord, Lord"; yes, ready to say "very God of very God," in whose daily life Jesus has no place, and for whom practically He does not count. With all the Scriptures behind me, with the specific declaration of the Lord Himself as my warrant, I want to say that lip compliments of that kind are not going to open the kingdom to any one. People may call Christ Lord and yet make their bed in hell. If it depended upon what we *think* of Christ we should all have an abundant entrance ministered unto us, for we all think Him the greatest, the wisest, the noblest of men, the one Divine Man. But it doesn't depend upon opinion, it depends upon attitude. The critical question is not "What think ye of Christ?" but this harder and more difficult question, "What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

GOD'S PROTECTING CARE

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth by noonday.—PSALM xci. 5, 6.

THIS is a brave and cheerful Psalm—an admirable tonic for low spirits. It strikes an exultant and triumphant note! It breathes of deliverance and victory and safety. It is quietly and serenely optimistic in its outlook. "I will deliver thee" is the promise of Almighty God that goes sounding through its verses.

"Thou shalt not be afraid" is the consequent challenge that the Psalmist addresses to timid and trembling man!

Now there are two kinds of optimism—a false and a true.

There is a false optimism, a delusive security, an unwarranted cheerfulness! It is the optimism of the man who will only contemplate one set of facts, who deliberately turns a blind eye to the deadly dangers, the ghastly wrongs, the hideous miseries of life. It is written in this old Book concerning a certain king that he refused to allow any one clothed in sackcloth to come near his palace. He did not want to be reminded of sorrow and of death. By banishing the sight of mourning raiment he

tried to persuade himself that the world in which he lived was altogether bright and gay. They played very much the same fool's game in Paris in the days before the Revolution broke out. When Marie Antoinette made her triumphal entry into Paris no beggar was allowed to be seen on the line of route. The authorities swept into the side streets all the wretched and poor of the capital. The eye of the young queen was not allowed a single glimpse of the seething misery of Paris. All was made to appear prosperous and fair. And so the young queen and her husband lived in a fool's paradise, until the fury of the Revolution wakened them up to the tragic reality! And there are people in the world who do for themselves what the authorities of Paris did for that ill-fated king and queen. They refuse to look at unpleasant facts! They refuse to contemplate the East-end of life. They live in Belgravia and ignore the squalor and poverty and filth and sin of Whitechapel and Bethnal Green. And by shutting their eyes to sin and sorrow, sickness and pain, poverty and death, they are able to prate jauntily about everything being as it should be in the best possible of worlds. I do not know whether this ought really to be called optimism at all. In many cases it is nothing but an affectation. It is a make-believe. The gaiety is forced. The laughter is that laughter of fools which the wise man contemptuously compares to the crackling of thorns under a pot. And where it is not an affectation—it is the offspring of ignorance and selfishness. The pessimist who feels the world's

misery and who fears the worst is infinitely nearer the truth than the shallow flippant optimist who refuses to see any misery at all.

The true optimism blinds its eyes to no fact. It ignores no difficulty, no wrong, no single item in the world's catalogue of woes. It sees life steadily and sees it whole. It notes every ugly fact. It confronts the world's sickness and pain and sorrow and sin and does not try to cheat itself into the belief (as some new-fangled religionists do) that they do not exist. It recognises their tragic reality. And yet, facing the entire mass of the world's misery and woe, it dares to hope, it is able to be of good courage, because behind all, in all, through all, it sees God. There can be no optimism—no sane, serene courage about the future of the world—apart from religion. To be without God is at the same time to be without hope. You have only to read modern sceptical literature to realise how inevitable that Apostolic sequence is. The literature of scepticism is pessimistic to the core, but the man who believes in God is always of good courage. You remember how Browning puts it:

> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched,
> That, after Last, returns the First,
> Though a wide compass round be fetched;
> That what began best can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst!

And St. Paul puts it in plainer, bolder speech still when he declares that all things work together for good to them that love God. Now this is the

only real optimism, the only optimism worth talking about. The optimism that manages to be optimistic only by ignoring the facts is a cheat and a delusion. The genuine optimism is that which recognises the reality of sin and pain and temptation and death, and yet can wear a "glorious morning face" in spite of them all, because behind all and through all it sees God. That was the manner of Christ's optimism. It was not the optimism of ignorance. Christ took life seriously. No one had a keener and more vivid sense of the world's pain and misery and sin than He had. But the vision of the world's sin did not breed bitterness and despair within His soul. He faced it all with a high and serene courage. "I beheld Satan fallen," He cried, "as lightning from heaven." Satan fallen! Evil overcome! For behind the obtrusive sin and evil of the world He saw God.

That is the optimism of the Psalmist in the text. His is not the optimism that ignores the trials and troubles that meet us on our way through life. On the contrary, in this Psalm he frankly recognizes the multitudinousness of our perils. Listen to the catalogue: "The terror by night," "the arrow that flieth by day," "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," "the destruction that wasteth at noonday." "The day," "the noonday," "the night"—they have all their peculiar perils: there is no time of life which has not its own special dangers. Shall we say "day" and "night" stand for prosperity and poverty, gladness and sorrow? Well, the "day" has its dangers—the glare of unclouded prosperity

is apt to sterilize the soul. And the "night" has its dangers, too—poverty is apt to sour the spirit, and sorrows sometimes shatter faith.

Or shall we say that "day," "noonday" and "night" stand for the varying stages of life—youth, manhood, and age? Again, each stage has its perils. There is, as Tennyson says, a Knight of the Morning Star, and a Knight of the Noonday Star, and a Knight of the Evening Star, who lie in wait for all pilgrims on life's way. There is an "arrow that flieth by day." The dawn has its dangers. Youth has its perils. It is subject to fierce assaults on the side of the passions. "Flee youthful lusts," said the Apostle. There is also a "destruction that wasteth at noonday." Middle-age has its perils. The special danger of youth is passion. The special danger of manhood is materialism. Men get engrossed in business; they become absorbed in the things of time and sense. They gain the world, possibly, but they lose their souls—slain by the "destruction that wasteth at noonday." And there is a "terror by night." The peculiar temptation of old age is the temptation to doubt and fear. The thought of death appals and terrifies men as they approach it.

Every age and every condition and every lot has its perils—we are in the midst of foes. And yet in face of them all the Psalmist is quietly and serenely confident. "Thou shalt not be afraid," is his exulting cry. Over against all these menacing foes he sets a keeping and preserving God!

God can keep youth clean and unsullied. The "arrow by day" shall not hurt them but in the

midst of life's seething temptations, they shall wear the white flower of the blameless life. God can keep manhood unselfish and heavenly minded. The "destruction that wasteth at noonday" shall not touch them. They shall use the world without abusing it. God can keep old age brave and hopeful. "The terror by night" shall not haunt them. The end shall be divested of fear. "At eventide it shall be light."

God can do all this! God is Helper, Shield, Defender, Deliverer! And because God can do all this, men can live lives unbroken by fear, unharassed by care. Here is the secret of the cheerful life—to remember God, to make the Most High our habitation. When we have done that we can be serenely confident—no harm shall befall us, neither shall any plague come nigh our tent.

NEHUSHTAN

And he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.—2 KINGS xviii. 4.

WHAT had God given the brazen serpent to the children of Israel for? To heal those of them who had been bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness. "It came to pass," says the old chronicler, "that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass he lived." But this same brazen serpent which to their fathers had been a means of healing, had become to them a cause of sin, inasmuch as they burned incense to it and worshipped it. It had been a blessing once: it had now become a curse. Hezekiah therefore determined to destroy it. This is a strange power that men have, that of converting a blessing into a curse by misuse. But everywhere we see evidences of it. Take the qualities of our human nature. Healthy ambition is a virtue and a blessing; but when ambition takes possession of a man, when to satisfy his ambition he tramples on justice and kindness, and love—the virtue has been changed into a vice, the blessing into a curse. What a curse, for instance, his ambition was to Napoleon, what crimes he committed to satisfy it! Amiability is a blessing, but when amiability makes us yield to temptation, makes us acquiesce in unholy proposals, robs us of

our power of saying "No," amiability ceases to be a blessing and becomes a curse. Amiability has been the ruin of thousands! It has led to sacrifice of principle and to compromise with sin. Wherefore our Lord said, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you."

In much the same way men by abuse can change even religious blessings into curses. Let me take an illustration from the time of our Lord. *Take the Sabbath.* There never was a more gracious gift bestowed upon toiling weary men than the gift of the seventh day as a day of rest. It was a precious boon—this gift of the Sabbath; a gift which was designed to gladden men's hearts and bring them the opportunity of communion with God! But look at the Jews at the time of Christ, and are we far wrong in saying that this day of rest and joy had become a burden and well nigh a curse to them? The Rabbis had kept adding restriction unto restriction until the Sabbath, which ought to have been a day of radiant gladness, had become not simply the most burdensome day in the week, but actually an occasion of sin. It was the way in which the Jews were perverting a blessing into a burden that called forth from Jesus that notable protest, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." And I am not sure that we are not in danger in these latter days of turning the blessing of the Sabbath into a curse, not by making it an austere gloomy day as the Jews did, but in just the opposite way, by turning it into a day of pleasure and indulgence.

Or *take the Sanctuary*. How the Jew revered the Temple! He loved its courts. A day in them was better than a thousand! He envied the sparrows who found a house and the swallows who built their nests in the Temple precincts! And yet the Temple, the glorious house of God, became a curse. Read the Prophets and you will see that "treading the Temple courts" had, with multitudes of people, taken the place of a genuine religion! They were satisfied with the formality of worship and sacrifice without any real communion with God. The Temple, instead of being a help, had become a hindrance to genuine religion. And I am not sure that our churches and chapels have not on some people the same kind of effect still. They get to identify religion with the mere external act of worship. They feel that if they have gone to church or chapel they have done all that is necessary. And so the church which was meant to be a help by summoning them to communion actually becomes a hindrance because it acts as a salve to their consciences and a soporific to their souls. When what God designed for a means is made an end in itself it ceases to be a blessing and becomes a curse.

What was the brazen serpent? It was the material token of the pitying mercy of God: it was the symbol of the divine power: it was a reminder of the divine holiness. The pity, the power, the holiness were, of course, *not* in that bit of brass, but in God. There was no saving energy in the serpent itself. It was a mere help and aid to faith: the

material symbol of a divine grace. But gradually the people came to think some virtue resided in the serpent itself. They began to worship it and pray to it, and offer incense to it. And when things came to such a pass that the people put the serpent in the place of God, then, ancient and venerable relic though it was, symbol of God's healing grace though it was, it was time to destroy it. And so Hezekiah broke it in pieces and called it in fierce contempt—this thing which they had worshipped—"Nehushtan, a piece of brass." And here we get an illustration of the standing peril of symbolism. This adoration of the brazen serpent is no isolated and unique phenomenon. Mankind is always in peril of substituting the symbol for the thing symbolised. I suppose in the beginning *images* were not meant to be regarded as the very gods themselves. They were simply *representatives* of them, helps to the worshipper to realise the nature of the gods he worshipped. At first, at any rate, the divine power was not supposed to be actually resident in the material image. Through the image men worshipped the deity whom it was supposed to represent. But though that may be the philosophy of idolatry, we know what actually happened. Men's minds never travelled beyond the image. They rested in the symbol. They did not worship the god through the image, they worshipped the image *as* the god. Yes, they actually came to believe that divine power resided in those lumps of wood or stone which could neither hear nor see nor feel nor answer.

And that illustrates a danger inseparable from symbolism. You invent a symbol to help worship and the peril is that the symbol will absorb worship. You can see that peril illustrated in the history of the Christian Church. I will not illustrate by the pictures and images of the Roman Church, though they are an exact illustration of what I mean. I prefer to find my illustration in things that concern us and which may become a peril to us. The symbolism of the Christian Church centres in its Sacraments. Baptism is a beautiful symbol. Thereby Christ claims every child as His own and says "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." The Lord's Supper is a beautiful symbol. The bread and the wine remind us of Christ's body broken and His blood shed for the remission of sins; and they remind us, too, of that meat and drink for our souls which are stored up for us in Christ. Both these Sacraments are beautiful and holy helps to us. I speak for myself when I say that the most sacred moments of my life, the times when Christ comes nearest to me, are those moments when I sit at His table and eat of the bread and drink of the cup. But when we allow these Sacraments to become more than symbols, when we begin to put our trust in the rites themselves—these holy Sacraments, instead of being helps to us, may become our undoing. And that is exactly what has taken place with regard to them. Men have begun to trust in the symbol. They have identified the thing symbolised with the symbol. The water at baptism, instead of being the symbol of the

cleansing Spirit has become itself the laver of regeneration. The bread and wine at the Communion, instead of being mere tokens, have become changed into the very body and blood of Christ. And so we have the doctrines of Baptismal Regeneration and Sacramental Grace, and men think that, having been baptised and having communicated, they are, therefore, members of the kingdom of heaven. I do not hesitate to say that such doctrines are pernicious and fatal in their effects. They make religion mechanical instead of vital—formal instead of spiritual. They reduce it to an exercise, a mere ceremonial, instead of a life. And they dull and deceive the souls of men, for, after all, you may be baptised and a communicant, you may have every certificate and guarantee the Church can give you, and yet Christ may never know you. For it is not they who call Him "Lord, Lord," who enter the kingdom of heaven, but only they who do the will of His Father, who is in Heaven.

In such circumstances what do we need? We need the Iconoclast. We need someone who will do for us what Hezekiah did for Judah long ago. "This is no God," said Hezekiah about the brazen serpent, "this is Nehushtan—a mere piece of brass," and he broke it to pieces. We are apt to think lightly and scornfully of the Iconoclast. I am not sure indeed that he does not come in for our censure and blame. But I have it in mind to thank God for the Iconoclast. The breaking of idols—the shattering of superstitions and lies, the laying of the axe to the root of the trees—it is not

pleasant work. I will even admit it is not the highest work. But idols have to be broken before the true God can be seen; and superstitions and falsities have to be exploded before the truth can be revealed; and the Upas tree of deceit and formalism has to be cut down before the Tree of Life and Knowledge can grow.

THE CHOSEN FEW

And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you and deliver the Midianites into thine hand.—JUDGES vii. 7.

WHY did God insist upon the sifting which reduced an army of thirty-two thousand men to a mere band of three hundred? The narrative seems to suggest a two-fold reason. This is the first: If Israel had gone into battle thirty-two thousand strong, they would have said the victory was their own; they would have vaunted themselves against God, saying "Mine own hand hath saved me." In other words, the sacred writer suggests that the reduction took place in order to make it abundantly clear that Israel's salvation was of the Lord. And this was a lesson the children of Israel needed to learn. They were constantly forgetting God and trusting to themselves. They needed to be taught that no man is saved by the multitude of an host, neither is a mighty man delivered by his much strength; but that nations like individuals are strong only when they are strong in God. And God wanted to leave them in no doubt whatever that it was His arm that brought salvation for them. He did it by overthrowing the multitudinous hosts of Midian with this tiny band of three hundred men. It was a revelation to Israel of the mighty power of God. The feebler and humbler the instrument God

uses for the accomplishment of His mighty works, the more plainly and dazzlingly does His own glory shine forth. He is constantly choosing the foolish things of the world to put to shame them that are wise, and the weak things of the world that He may put to shame the things that are strong, and the base things of the world and the things that are despised does God choose, and the things that are not, that He may bring to nought the things that are. And the result is, no flesh can glory in His presence. Men realise that these weak instruments are not sufficient to account for the magnitude of the achievement; behind the human instrument they see God. They realise He is the true worker, and they give glory to Him. He chose a dozen humble Galileans to be the first preachers. Had He chosen learned rabbis, mighty scholars, famous philosophers—people might have put down the success of the propaganda to the eloquence and power of the preachers. But He chose a dozen poor fisherfolk without influence or learning, and when these insignificant and unlettered folk turned the world upside down men recognised that the work was not theirs. The character of the instrument did not account for the magnitude of the achievement. Men were driven to confess that here was the mighty power of God.

And God is constantly doing this—using the most unlikely instruments to accomplish the most stupendous results. Think of what He has done in our own day and time. He used the illiterate manager of a Chicago boot-store to quicken religion

in two continents. He used a young and untrained collier to shake Wales from end to end. And the scoffer is awed and silenced, and he is constrained to confess that God is a living and an active God.

That was the truth this victory of three hundred Israelites over an innumerable multitude of Midianites was meant to teach—God is a living and active God and, with God to help, weak, feeble instruments are equal to mighty achievements. It is a lesson we need to learn still—God is the real worker and, with God to help, the weak things of the world are able to bring to nought the things that are strong. We often feel ourselves in contrast with the evil world's power to be as weak as Gideon's three hundred must have felt in face of the hosts of Midian. Let us think of God, the mighty God, the everlasting God, who faints not, neither is weary. Let us think of God, I say! We are not the only workers. This is not how the case stands—the Church on the one side and the embattled world on the other. This is how it stands—the world on the one side and the Church and God upon the other. That spells victory. "One with God," said the old Dutch reformer, "is in a majority." We need not be afraid. Greater is He that is with us than all that are against us. God will perfect His strength in our weakness and bring us off more than conquerors. God will do it! And when at last the final victory is won we shall worship Him and say, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name be all the glory."

But there is another reason besides this why God

insisted upon the sifting of the thirty-two thousand until only three hundred were left. He wanted not simply to teach the Israelites that He was the real worker and conqueror. He wanted also to teach them this simple lesson, that, in making up the army of the Lord, *quality was of much more account than quantity.* Gideon had got together thirty-two thousand men, but they were a mob, not an army. Hundreds and thousands of them were obviously frightened and panic-stricken, they would have been not a help but a hindrance in the hour of conflict. Better, infinitely better, have a handful of men who meant business than have a multitude of men whose hearts were melted within them, and who would run away at the first shock of battle. In the Lord's army it is *quality that counts, not quantity.* It is so indeed in any and every army. You remember, for instance, how Cromwell insisted upon quality in the troops of the Commonwealth. Apparently there was no lack of recruits in the early stages of the Civil War. But the recruits were of the wrong sort. They were, as Cromwell himself said, "decayed serving men, tapsters, and such kind of fellows." What wonder if, with soldiers of that base quality, the troops of the Parliament met with reverse after reverse? "We must get men of a spirit," said Cromwell, "of a spirit that will go as far as gentlemen will go, or else we shall be beaten still." So Cromwell gave his entire mind to the improvement of the quality of the soldiers. He insisted upon having men who made some conscience of what they did, and who had the fear of

God before their eyes. Sober, upright, God-fearing men, these were the soldiers Cromwell asked for. Out of them he made his redoubtable Ironsides. And of them he says—those quiet grey men who went into battle singing Psalms—that they were never beaten, but whenever they engaged the enemy they beat continually.

But if quality is essential to the efficiency of an earthly army, it is tenfold more essential for the efficiency of the Army of the Lord. When I read the New Testament I am struck by this fact that Christ was infinitely more concerned about quality than He was about quantity. Christ was not so much anxious that He should have a multitude of disciples as that what disciples He did have should be disciples of the right sort. In fact, in the story of Christ's career you can detect a sifting process similar to that which brought Gideon's army down from thirty-two thousand to three hundred. Christ started with a multitude of admirers and followers. They pressed upon Him and thronged Him. Whenever He was expected to preach they were there by the thousand to listen to Him. But Christ knew these multitudes that listened to His early preaching were of no use for His purposes. They were worthless for conflict and battle and sacrifice. And so our Lord proceeded to sift the multitude out. He sifted out those who followed Him in hope of material gain by speaking that hard word about His flesh being meat indeed and His blood being drink indeed. And upon that, John says, " many of His disciples went

back and walked no more with Him." He sifted out the merely impulsive folk by confronting them with the hardships of the service. "Foxes have holes," He said, "and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." He sifted out the heart of the rich young ruler by the command for unconditional and absolute surrender. "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor and come follow Me!" And the result was that Jesus, who had multitudes of applauding friends at the start of His career, had only a handful at the finish. But for Christ's purposes this little handful of men, tried, tested, utterly consecrated, were infinitely more effective than the multitudes of the early days ever could have been. It was *quality* Christ cared for, not *quantity*. He was not so anxious to have many disciples, as He was that all His disciples should be of the right kind. And it is *quality* not *quantity* that is the all-essential thing in the composition of the Lord's army to-day.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS

Ye are My friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known unto you.—JOHN xv. 14, 15.

FRIENDSHIP is always a reciprocal relation. There are always two parties to it. We say that "it takes two to make a quarrel." It takes two also to make a friendship. It is not enough to have love all on one side. A friendship is formed when love meets and answers love. The name which the Pharisee flung at Christ in scorn and which He picked up and wore as a title of honour was this: "Friend of publicans and sinners." That title describes Christ's attitude towards men, towards *all* men. Christ is the friend of all men. He is the lover of all souls. While we were yet sinners Christ died. And even while we remain sinners His love pursues us and persistently pleads with us. But there is no friendship so long as the love is only on Christ's side. There is no friendship until the love of our hearts leaps up in response to the great love of Christ. When love answers love it is then that friendship is formed.

Now love always demonstrates itself. It proves its reality by its effects. A genuine friendship always produces certain results. "Ye are My

friends," Christ said to His disciples. The proof of it on His part was that He had admitted them into His confidence, that He had trusted them, that He had kept back no secrets from them. "I have called you friends," He says, and in evidence of the reality of the friendship He adds, "for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known unto you." Indeed, that is the distinction which Jesus draws between the friend and the slave. "The slave knoweth not what his lord doeth." The slave has to do his work in blind obedience. "His not to reason why; his not to make reply." His master does not explain his plans or purposes to him, he only sets him his task and bids him do it. But to a friend he explains everything; he tells all about his purposes and plans. From a friend he wants not blind obedience but sympathy and understanding. He keeps plenty of secrets from his slaves, he has no secrets from his friends. Now Jesus called these disciples of His not slaves but friends. And it was no case of giving them a fine name with nothing behind it. Christ not only called them friends, He treated them as friends. These twelve men were Christ's confidantes. He trusted them. He opened His heart to them. He kept nothing back from them. All things that He had heard from the Father He made known to them. All that Jesus had learned of the meaning of life and the pathway to peace He made known to the disciples. All that the Father had told Him about the nature of the Kingdom and the necessity of the Cross He made known to them. Jesus did not

treat them as *slaves.* He never sent them out under "sealed orders." He never despatched them on service without explaining what that service was. He never said simply "Do this" or "Do that." He revealed God's great plans and purposes for the world and then invited them to come and share in their furtherance.

And the Lord has called us not servants but *friends,* and the proof of it is that all things which He has heard of the Father He has made known to us. He has kept no secrets back from us. He has expounded all things to us. He stands to us, not in the relation of a task-master ordering his slaves to a service for which he gives no reasons. He stands to us in the relation of a wise and loving Friend who knows the secret of life, who knows the way to the Father, and who wants to share with us that knowledge which He possesses, that knowledge which is eternal life. Christ does not order; He explains, He persuades, He woos, He pleads. He calls us and treats us not as slaves but friends.

And now what about man's share in this blessed and holy friendship? How will that show itself? The Master in the same passage supplies the answer. "Ye are My friends, if ye do the things which I command you." The Master's friendship for men shows itself in the fact that He keeps nothing back from them; man's friendship for the Lord proves itself in the "keeping of His commandments." The Master proves His friendship for us by His confidence; we prove our friend-

ship for Him by our obedience. For, though He calls us friends, He is still our Master and our Lord. "Ye are My friends, if ye do the things which I command you." But are we not back again now in the categories of slavery? Does not this sound exactly like the relation between a master and a slave? Is not that the slave's business—to do the things his master commands? Has not the Master slipped back almost unconsciously into slave language? No! Our Lord has made no mistake. It is not the slave but the friend, the true, genuine friend, who will do whatever his friend may desire or demand. The bondservant is kept to do his master's will and to advance his master's interests. And the master's friend will make it his business to advance his interests also. What then is the difference between the slave and the friend in the service they render? Just this, the one renders it from compulsion or for pay—the other renders it voluntarily and for love. Now what is the characteristic of forced labour? It is always grudging labour. It never does more than it is compelled. Honest, whole-hearted devotion to a person's interests is not the mark of the slave, it is the mark of the friend. And that is why Christ wanted "friends," not "slaves." He wanted men who would serve Him, not as a matter of task work, but out of sheer devotion and love. The slave works to order and to time; the friend gives himself body, soul and spirit. There is instruction on this point in the Lord's conversation with Peter by the Galilean Lake. You remember how three times

over Christ asked His penitent disciple the question, "Lovest thou Me?" and it was only after Peter had answered, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," that Christ appointed him his task: "Feed My lambs; Feed My sheep; Feed My sheep." And, unless I misunderstand the story, our Lord's insistence upon this matter of love was due to this: that no mere slave, no man who went to the task in the slave's spirit, would be equal to the work of feeding Christ's lambs and tending Christ's sheep. For it was difficult work, and weary work, and heart-breaking work. Only a friend would ever be equal to it. Only love would keep a man faithful in it. "Lovest thou Me?" said the Lord; "Yea, Lord," answered the disciple; "Tend My sheep," said the Master. He could entrust the task to a friend. For a friend counts no burden too heavy, no task too arduous, no sacrifice too great. Love makes labour light. And love makes labour earnest, intense, sacrificial as well.

SAMARIA AND ITS USES

And He must needs pass through Samaria.—JOHN iv. 4.

OUR Lord had been preaching and teaching in Judea. He wanted now to return home to Galilee. But between Judea and Galilee lay Samaria, a country whose people were at bitter enmity with all who bore the name of Jew, who refused to them the ordinary courtesies of hospitality, and who met a Jew only to insult and injure him. And Jesus had to traverse that hostile country. He "must needs" pass through Samaria.

"Must needs!" When you think of it, that is a strange expression to use of Jesus Christ. For does He not say somewhere "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth"? Yes, He does. And that that claim was no baseless, extravagant boast is proved up to the hilt by what our Lord did. When the people beheld His wondrous works they were constrained to glorify God, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion." No task seemed beyond the power of Jesus. Recall the gospel story! A word from Him and the leper is cleansed. Underneath His hands the five loaves and two fishes multiply into a feast for five thousand men; at His behest the wind is hushed and the waves subside and there is a great calm; at His call Lazarus, who had been in the grave for days,

issues forth alive; at a glance from Him the armed band who came to seize Him in the Garden fall helpless to the ground; a look from Him in the Judgment Hall is enough to break Peter's heart! No, this is no empty and blasphemous boast, but sober and simple truth. "All power is given unto Me."

And yet in the life of this omnipotent Christ there was many a "must needs." There was a "must needs" about His birth in Bethlehem. Christ's coming to earth was a necessity. Being what He was, He was compelled to leave His heaven for this poor world of ours. Because Christ was Christ, Christmas was bound to be. And there was a "must needs" about His lowly life of sacrifice and suffering and temptation. "It became Him," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." There was a "must needs" about the toils and sacrifice of His public career. He could not have been our Saviour and Brother and Perfect Friend without them. And there was a "must needs" about His death. That was the point of our Lord's Bible lesson to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. He showed them how it behoved the Christ to suffer these things. He showed them the "must needs" for the Cross. The Cross was no accident. Christ could not escape it. He saved others; Himself He could not save. It was for that hour—that dark and bitter hour—He had come into the world, and He must needs endure it.

But is it not a contradiction, you say, to assert on the one hand that all power belongs to Christ and then to assert there was many a " must needs " in His life? No, there is no real contradiction. For the " must needs " in Christ's case never arose from without! It was never a case of some outside power constraining Christ to action! The " must needs " always arose from within. The constraint under which Christ laboured was the constraint of His own great love; the necessity from which He could never escape was the necessity of living and acting in accord with His own essential character. There was a " must needs," as I have already said, about Calvary. But we shall make a profound mistake if we suppose for one moment that the " must needs " arose from the action of Judas, or of the High Priests, or of Pilate. Our Lord repudiates any idea of external constraint. " No man taketh My life from Me," He says. He tells those armed men who came to seize Him that if He wished, He could mock at all their force, for God would send to His help legions of angels. No, the " must needs " of the Cross did not arise from without. It arose from within. The whole secret is told in that familiar hymn:

> O 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
> The love of Christ for me,
> It brought the Saviour from above
> To die on Calvary.

All power was Christ's, but He cannot deny Himself, He " must needs " act in accordance with His own loving character.

Here in this verse we come across another of these "must needs" in the life of our Lord. He "must needs" pass through Samaria. Now some commentators interpret this as if it were merely a geographical note, meaning nothing more than that the nearest way to Galilee lay through the heart of Samaria. That might be so if our Lord's journey were one that required haste. But there is nothing in the story to indicate hurry. On the contrary, we read that when invited He is quite willing to tarry two days at Sychar. And we know that Jewish travellers from Judea to Galilee or *vice versa*, unless sorely pressed for time, habitually made a *détour* in their journey in order to avoid the necessity of passing through Samaria. No, this is not a "must needs" of geographical convenience. I think there is a deeper and richer meaning in it than that. I believe Jesus Christ shrank from going through Samaria. He had a tender and sensitive spirit. He felt every unkind word. He was cut to the quick by the rude scorn and mockery of men. And it may well have been that he shrank from exposing Himself—a Jew—to the rudeness and insult and scorn the people of Samaria might heap upon Him. Left to Himself, He would have preferred going round by the route Jewish pilgrims usually adopted, and avoiding Samaria altogether. But "He must needs pass through Samaria." Samaria was in God's will and plan for Him. These renegade and outcast Samaritans were also God's children and lay near His own heart. And His love constrained Him to go and

preach the good tidings to them in spite of any risk of annoyance and persecution at their hands. Perhaps even in Samaria He might do some good; perhaps even in Samaria He might find some soil prepared to receive the good seed of the Kingdom. Anyhow, His own love for men, His utter allegiance to the will of God, constrained Him to seek these "other sheep" which were not of the Jewish fold. He "must needs" pass through Samaria.

That then is the picture, Judea on the one hand, Galilee, the Master's home, upon the other, and Samaria, with its difficulties and possible insult and persecution, in between. And the finger of God points to it, and His own love insists upon it— that He must needs pass through Samaria before He can reach the quiet and welcome that await Him in Galilee. Now, I want to suggest that this is a parable of life—of this human life of ours. Life has its Judeas and its Galilees, its times of happiness and peace and joy. There are days when every healthy-minded person feels it is a keen joy to live. But life has its Samarias, too, its hard times, its difficult and trying times—its days which wound our spirits and well-nigh break our hearts. We would fain avoid the Samarias of life if we could. We would fain escape its sadness and its sorrows and its disappointments and its pain. But we cannot do it. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," says the old Book. And again, "Man is of few days and full of trouble." No man has ever lived who has succeeded in avoiding

them. Some have less and some have more—but none are without any. The supreme trouble of all none can escape. "We must needs die." Of every man and woman on this earth it is true to say they have their Samarias to pass through.

"He must needs pass through Samaria." But in the upshot, the Samaria our Lord dreaded turned out to be a place of blessing. This is what I read at the close of the story. I read of a multitude of Samaritans saying this, "We have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." Humanly speaking, perhaps Jesus would have preferred to go round; but afterwards He would thank God for the necessity that drove Him through Samaria. The two days He spent at Sychar were red-letter days. They stood out as two of the happiest days in the life of our Lord. The wilderness and the solitary place was glad for Him, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. And that is the history of every Samaria into which God constrains us to pass. The Valley of Weeping turns out to be a place of springs. God does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. He is always thinking upon us for our good. If He drives us into some Samaria of difficulty or trouble it is because there are blessings and enrichments to be had there that can be gained no where else. "It was good for me that I was afflicted," says one of the Old Testament saints. Samaria had conferred its blessing upon him. "I was to have been married, but she died," said a young doctor to Dr. Alexander Whyte—giving it as his reason for

wishing to sit down to the communion—even that bitter Samaria had yielded its blessing.

So let us not be afraid of Samaria when God leads us into it. Tennyson declares that when at the bidding of duty we set ourselves to do the distasteful and difficult thing we find

> The toppling crags of duty scaled,
> Are closed upon the shining table-lands
> To which our God Himself is moon and sun.

It is blessedly true. Every Samaria—dreary and terrible though it seems to us to be—has its blessing to give. "The stones thereof are the place of sapphires and it hath dust of gold."

THE SECRET LIFE

Then saith He unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in his chambers of imagery ?—EZEK. viii. 12.

TREATING this verse in a broad and general way, I want you to notice the suggestion it makes that there is in men *an outer and an inner life, and that, oftentimes, these do not correspond.* I have just used the word "oftentimes." I might have made use of a much stronger word. I might almost have said "never." Only once in the world's history has there been a Man who was absolutely single and sincere—whose inner life absolutely corresponded to his public profession—whose heart was as absolutely free from the evil thought and desire as his life was from the evil deed. Jesus was that Man. "Master," even His enemies said of Him, "we know that Thou art true"—true, not simply in the sense of truth-telling, but true in the sense of being honest, genuine, transparent, sincere. There was nothing double or ambiguous about Jesus. What He was outwardly He was inwardly. What He was inwardly He was outwardly. He was all "of a piece." He was like His cloak, "without seam throughout."

But as for the rest of men, even in the best there is ambiguity and dissonance. Oliver Wendell Holmes

says that in every man there are *three* men. Here is a man, let us call him John. Well, in John, the Autocrat says, there are three Johns. There is, to begin with, John, as his neighbours think of him; and there is, secondly, John, as he thinks of himself; and there is, thirdly, John, as God thinks of him. Now, I daresay a good deal can be said for Oliver Wendell Holmes's analysis. But for my purposes just now it is sufficient to say that in every man there are two men. There is the man as he appears to be to his friends and his neighbours, and there is the man as he knows himself to be in his own secret and inner life. And the two men do not always correspond. They do not correspond even in the genuinely good and saintly. Many a man who lives so saintly a life that temptation never seems to touch him, has a heart, if we only knew it, where fierce passions tear and rage. It was when John Bunyan had been a preacher of the Gospel for years, when he was far on the way to saintliness, that he complained that his heart was as full of corruption and vileness as a fountain was of water.

But it is not so much of the contradiction even the best men are conscious of between heart and life that I am thinking of now. That contradiction, in God's good time, will entirely disappear and the genuine saint shall be clean every whit. I am thinking now, rather, of the men who deliberately try to appear one thing in the eyes of the world and who are quite another and a different thing in the privacy of their own hearts. Here were these Jerusalem elders in these far-gone days! In public they

posed as religious men, devout worshippers of Jehovah. At all the Temple festivals you could depend on finding them there. They had the reputation of being good, orthodox Jews. And all the while, in secret and out of sight of the crowds, they grovelled before the abominable beasts and creeping things which they had portrayed upon their walls.

Are they the only people who have been one thing in public and another thing in private? Alas! no! They have had their successors in every age, and they have them still. I read in the old Book, for instance, of men of whom it is said, "They feared the Lord, and served other gods." They paid outward respect and deference to Jehovah, but their real allegiance was given to "other gods." It was just a case of these elders over again. I read in the New Testament about the Pharisees, and of them our Lord said that though they paid tithe on mint and anise and cummin and loved the chief seats in the synagogue and made long prayers at the corners of the streets —it was all a deceit and a sham, for all the time their hearts were full of rottenness and uncleanness. It was a case of these elders over again. And have they no imitators to-day? They have their imitators in plenty. Men appear one thing and are another. They are one thing in public and another in the secrecy of their souls. Most men, at any rate, pay lip-service to truth and honesty and purity. A man is not respectable if he has not the *reputation* for being true and honest and clean.

But it is not every man who has the reputation for being true and clean who really is all that. I am not going to adopt the cynic's view and say that all goodness and virtue is a mere parade and sham. And yet the stern and stubborn facts of experience constrain us to admit that reputation and essential character do not always correspond.

Now let me pass on to emphasise the truth that it is the *inner life that counts*. It is the inner life that is the essential thing—because it is the inner life that furnishes the true index to the man. What a man does in public, before the eyes of men, for purposes of judgment does not matter very much. What really matters is what a man does in the dark, in the chamber of his imagery. For in public we are all of us more or less artificial. We are compelled to observe the decencies and bow to the conventions of social life. It is when these restraints are removed that we are our real essential selves. That is why the Bible lays such emphasis upon the *heart*. Out of the heart, it declares, are the issues of life. "The Lord looketh not on the outward appearance," it further asserts, "He looketh upon the heart." Only as you can see what a man is in his inmost secret heart do you really know what the man is like. So, I repeat, it is the inner life that counts. This is an old familiar truth, but one that needs to be continually emphasised and reiterated in our hearing. *It is the inner life that counts*. Not our outward profession, but our inner life. "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father

which is in heaven." That was why our Lord said that there were first that should be last and last that should be first. Precedence in the Kingdom did not depend upon parade—it depended upon the devotion of the heart. That was why our Lord declared that the Pharisee—the first man in religion according to popular repute—was left out of the Kingdom altogether; while publicans and harlots—the moral refuse and scum of humanity—went in before him, because deep down in their sin-stained souls they had a genuine love for God.

THE RELIGION OF THE SECOND MILE

And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.—MATT. v. 41.

HERE we have a rule of Christian conduct expressed for us by our Lord in proverbial form. Quite clearly a bare literalism would empty the maxim of its significance and would, indeed, make it puerile and absurd. In the case of this precept —as in the case of so many others in this great Sermon on the Mount—the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. What it is of the utmost importance we should understand is the *spirit* of this precept, the principle of Christian conduct which is embodied in this proverb.

To arrive, however, at the permanent principle of action which our Lord here propounds, we must first of all get a clear understanding of the illustration by means of which He expresses it, for the reference in my text is to a practice or custom with which those who were listening to Jesus would be perfectly familiar. The word which our Revised Version—following the example of the Authorised—renders "compel," would be far more accurately rendered by the word "impress" which the Revisers have put in the margin. Now the word "impress" suggests State pressure and compulsion, obligatory

public service of some kind. We have heard even here in England of the press-gang taking this man and the other and compelling them to serve as seamen in the time of the Napoleonic wars. Well, this word "impress" also refers to obligatory State service, though of another kind. The word, Dr. Morison says, is of Persian origin and has reference to a postal arrangement which was greatly admired by the Greek historians, and which was practically adopted by the later Empires. On the great roads stations were established where horses and riders were kept for the purpose of carrying forward the royal mails on the principle of relays. In cases of emergency, the couriers were authorised to press into the service any available persons, or beasts of burden, or other means of transport. It is to this power of impressment Jesus is referring in the text. No doubt these requisitions for the postal service would often be inconvenient, sometimes perhaps vexatious, and to a subject people, very likely peculiarly galling. But, instead of resenting the State's demand, Christ bids His people do more than was required. This is how Bishop Gore paraphrases this maxim: "When any public officer presses thee into the transport service for a certain way, be prepared to take double the impost."

But, of course, we must not limit the application of this precept to the single matter of the transport service or else we must say that, inasmuch as the particular postal arrangements in vogue in Christ's day have passed away, the precept has no

applicability to our modern life. As a matter of fact, the postal arrangements simply supply Christ with His illustration, and, conveyed by the illustration, there is a great and vital principle which is of permanent validity, and which is applicable to many things besides the Christian's duty towards the transport service. How, then, shall we generalise the truth taught by this illustration? This is how Bishop Gore does it: "Do not resent public claims upon you; bear the public burdens and be willing that, as far as you are concerned, they shall be double what they are." That is to say, the Bishop takes this verse as defining the Christian's attitude towards the State and civic duties. I think the principle set forth in it is of wider application far than that. But that is no doubt the primary reference, and it will profit us to look at this application of the text for a moment or two.

This saying, then, sets forth the principle that ought to govern the Christian *in his attitude towards the State.* Briefly stated, that principle is this: *A Christian's duty to the State is never limited to those services which the State demands and compels.* He must go beyond the legal—the necessary—and freely spend himself for her good. Now let me try to explain what I mean. Had there been time, I should like to have said a word at this point about Christ's conception of the State. For, of course, back of what He says here about a man's duties to the State, lies His own conception of what the State is. I must, however, content myself with saying that Christ recognised the

authority of the State. He Himself, you remember, paid tribute, and bade the disciples render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. His apostles, too, recognise, shall I say, the Divine authority of the State. Christian people are to honour the king; they are to render tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom, honour to whom honour. They are to obey rulers, for rulers, according to St. Paul, are themselves ministers of God. Of course, there are limits to the obedience men owe the State (the apostles themselves, for instance, became law-breakers in Jerusalem and elsewhere because compelled to obey the higher law of God)—still, no one can read the New Testament without seeing that the State is looked upon as a Divine institution, with claims upon the allegiance and obedience of its subjects.

Now, there are certain duties to the State which are obligatory. We are *compelled* to render them. The most obvious of them all is the share we are all compelled to take in bearing the burden of the State by the payment of our taxes. It would be a good thing if we learned to take a Christian view of the payment of our taxes and cheerfully accepted the burden which membership in this great Empire imposes upon us. But the whole teaching of this precept is that a Christian's duty to his country is not limited to those services which the State compels him to render. We have not done all that it is our duty to do when we have sent in an honest income tax return. That is the one mile of compulsion; but the Christian will go a second mile

in free and voluntary service. There are plenty of people who pay their taxes and keep the law, and think that, having done so much, they have done all that the State has a right to expect. They may even think themselves, and be spoken of by others, as "good citizens." But, with this verse for my warrant, I will tell you what they are *not*—they are *not* "good Christians," for this is the mark of the Christian in his attitude towards the State—he not only faithfully renders the obligatory services, but he voluntarily and cheerfully labours for the State's well-being and his country's highest good. He is not content simply with paying his taxes and keeping the laws, in a score of ways he will seek to serve the State. He will give time and energy to the work, let us say, of local administration; he will serve his town on the Council; or his district on the Board of Guardians; or his county or borough at St. Stephen's. He will lend a hand at the various agencies for the ameliorating of the condition of the people. He will loyally and strenuously assist all philanthropies and charities. Temperance work, purity work, the uplifting of the degraded and the poor—all these will command his sympathy, because they make directly for the highest well-being of the State. The Christian is always a patriot—the highest type of patriot. Far from refusing to take part in the national life of his day, the Christian is here laid under the duty of doing more than the man who is not a Christian. The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian citizen is just this—

that while both are compelled to go the one mile of obligatory duty, the Christian goes a second mile in free and willing service for his country's good. Think of John Howard. He fulfilled all the obligatory duties of the citizen. But John Howard did not stop there. He gave his life up to the work of cleansing and reforming the prisons of England. That magnificent and voluntary service was John Howard's second mile. Think of Lord Shaftesbury. He, again, fulfilled all the obligatory duties of the citizen and the peer. But Lord Shaftesbury did not stop there. He gave up his life to the service of the poor and the oppressed in this land. He sought to serve his country by safeguarding the lives and improving the conditions of her toilers. We know what Lord Shaftesbury accomplished. That magnificent career of public philanthropy was Lord Shaftesbury's second mile. Think of General Booth, so recently taken from us. Probably most of us differed from him in some point or other. But I am sure there is not one who did not admire him and thank God for him. England contained no truer patriot. His religion made him a social reformer. General Booth was not content with the discharge of his obligatory citizen duties—of his own free will he flung himself into the very forefront of the fight against drink and poverty. You may think what you like of his schemes, but there was something moving and sublime in the old man's gigantic philanthropic labours. And all this stupendous social work was simply General Booth's second mile.

And the second mile—this service over and above the obligatory—is everywhere the mark of the Christian. Is there much evidence of the second mile in our citizen life? Over and above the discharge of our obligatory duties, do we spend ourselves in voluntary service for our country's good? Can we honestly say that we are labouring our very utmost in England's highest interests? I would like to press upon my readers the claims every philanthropic, ameliorative, and redemptive agency has for their active and strenuous support. For we, as Christ's followers, have not discharged our duties to our land when we have paid the taxes and kept the laws. Christ asks "something more" of us. Beyond the one mile of necessity and obligation, He asks us to go a second in free and voluntary service.

STRENGTH FOR LIFE'S PERPLEXITIES

Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, is in the heavens; Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies. Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God; Thy judgments are a great deep.—PSALM xxxvi. 5, 6.

IN our study of these verses let us begin with the last phrase. "Thy judgments are a great deep"—the Psalmist finds an analogy between the judgments of God and the wide and restless ocean. Now, to understand the precise point and the exact force of the analogy, we must remember how the Jew thought of the sea. Island races like ours love the sea. But the Jew was a landsman, and he feared it. The sea to him was associated with swift and startling changes, with fierce storms, with peril and sudden death. The unreliability of the sea, the brooding mystery of it, filled the Jew's heart with a sense of fear and awe—so that, whenever it is used as a figure or illustration in the Old Testament, it is always its terrifying aspect that is prominent in the mind of the writer. And the judgments of God are like "the great deep," says this Psalmist—as startling, as incomprehensible, as mysterious, as the sea, chilling the soul and filling it with fear.

"Thy judgments are a great deep." What is

the Psalmist's tone of voice when he utters this sentence? What is his accent? How are we to interpret this statement? Is it meant for a complaint? Does he say it with a shudder? Is there the sound of a sob in the voice as he speaks it? Is it a challenge and indictment of God's ways? No! the commentators unanimously tell us. This is not an indictment, this is a hymn; it is not a sob, it is a shout of praise; it is not a complaint, it is a pæan. The verses beginning with verse 5 are as blithe as a lark's song, they are the spontaneous carollings of a gladsome spirit. But surely this is a most extraordinary thing—that a man should preserve his joyous spirit even in face of the solemn mysteries of life! We cry sometimes, "Thy judgments are a great deep"—but then it is a heart-broken cry with us, a choking sob, a low moan. But this man sings it—with a shining face. I say again, this is a most extraordinary thing! I do not say an unparalleled thing! There is a verse in a familiar modern hymn which says—

> "O blissful lack of wisdom, 'tis blessed *not* to know."

"'Tis blessed *not* to know"—that is the case of a person singing this sentence, "Thy judgments are a great deep"—singing it not in the notes of a plaintive and wailing minor, but in the notes of the strong and exultant major. Paul and Silas at midnight—when everything was as black as pitch—well, what did Paul and Silas do at midnight? Paul and Silas at midnight were praying and singing hymns unto God. "Singing hymns . . . at

midnight." That was like this Psalmist chanting with cheerful heart, "Thy judgments are a great deep."

Now would you not like to be able to sing hymns at midnight? Would you not like to know the secret of a brave and quiet heart in face of life's perplexities? Would you not like to be able to say, "Thy judgments are a great deep," not with a sob, but a song? Well, now, let us try, if we can, to discern the Psalmist's secret. For, be sure of this—this cheerfulness in face of life's blinding mysteries has its roots and reasons. This is the effect—let us try to get behind it to its causes! This is the glancing and flashing stream—let us expose its hidden springs! This is the fragrant flower—let us burrow to its roots. This is no difficult task. A glance at the preceding verses lays the whole secret bare. "Thy lovingkindness," he cries, "O Lord, is in the heavens; thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies; Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God." In these great certitudes of the Psalmist's soul you have the whole secret of his unruffled calm in face of the baffling and often cruel mysteries of life. He is certain of the lovingkindness, the faithfulness, the righteousness of God. "Thy judgments are a great deep"—that is the Psalmist's confession of ignorance and bewilderment. But over against his ignorance he sets his certainties—the kindness, the fidelity, the absolute justice of God, and in the strength of these he can bear the other. Notice the sequence, the lovingkindness, the faithfulness, the righteousness of God.

What next? Hymns at midnight; "Thy judgments are a great deep"—sung as a chant of triumph.

Now the secret of courage and cheerfulness is still the same. You cannot have the flower without the roots. You cannot have the flashing and happy stream without the hidden spring. You cannot have "songs at midnight" unless they are inspired by a sure confidence in the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God. You cannot bear your ignorance except in the strength of your certainties. You will cry "Thy judgments are a great deep" with a choking sob, unless, first of all, you are sure as this Psalmist was sure that God's love is ever encircling you as the heavens, that His fidelity is in the skies far above the region of mutable and changing cloud, and that His righteousness is as sure as the everlasting hills.

THE UNFETTERED WORD

Wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound.—2 Tim. ii. 9.

The contrast here is plain and obvious, it is a contrast between the imprisoned preacher and the unfettered word. The Roman authority had put chains upon Paul's limbs, but they had been quite unable to put chains upon Paul's gospel. "The Word of God," he says exultingly, "is not bound." When it became evident that imprisonment and, possibly, death lay in front of Paul, I think I am fully justified by what I find written in the New Testament in saying that the prospect caused the great Apostle no personal sorrow or grief. Paul's heart had been in heaven for years. His affections had been set on things above, and especially on Jesus Christ, ever since that memorable day when the gleaming vision of his Lord's face flashed upon him on the way outside Damascus. He longed for the day when he should see his Saviour face to face and live in the perpetual enjoyment of His presence. Death had no terrors for Paul; for himself, he would have welcomed it as a boon and a blessing. You remember what he says himself: "To depart and be with Christ is far better." And again: "I am ready to be offered." The only element of anxiety and sorrow in the anticipation of imprisonment and possible death was his concern as to what would

become of the work if he were taken away. Paul was afraid that if his lips were silenced the proclamation of the good news of the gospel might be stayed. He feared that if the worker were removed the work itself would suffer. And one of the happiest and most gracious of the surprises of his first imprisonment was the discovery that, though he—the most active of all gospel missionaries—was removed from the field, the gospel continued to win its widening way.

To begin with, his first imprisonment opened up a new sphere of service for himself—for though the chain was on his wrist, his tongue and his pen were free. In the quiet of his prison days he turned letter-writer, and the letters he wrote from his cell have carried the gospel to lands and peoples which he himself could never have reached. And furthermore, it introduced him to a new congregation. Paul the prisoner came into contact with Roman legionaries and warders and State officials—people whom he had not touched in the course of his evangelistic labours. And he preached his gospel to them with the result that his bonds were known to the whole of the Prætorian Guard, and the imprisonment which he dreaded as an obstacle to the progress of the Kingdom turned out rather, he says, unto the furtherance of the gospel.

And now, in his second imprisonment, he has the same happy assurance to cheer him. He himself was not able to do as much as he had done during the first imprisonment. At the time of the first imprisonment Rome had no quarrel with the

Christians, and, consequently, Paul, though nominally a prisoner, had his own lodging and could meet his friends, and enjoyed a large measure of liberty. But at the time of the second imprisonment Rome herself had taken up the quarrel against the Christians. And the consequence was there were no longer any little immunities and favours for the apostle. He was now kept in close and rigorous captivity. And yet, in his dungeon, Paul was cheered with news of the success of the gospel. Though he himself was laid aside, Timothy and Titus and scores of other evangelists were free, and were, perhaps, roused to greater and more strenuous activity by the realisation that they had to try to make up for his absence. Anyhow, tidings reached him in his cell that the gospel continued to win its widening way. The foes of the gospel had imprisoned and silenced him—but they had utterly failed to stop or even to retard the spread of Christian truth. "I suffer hardship in the gospel unto bonds as a malefactor," the apostle writes, "but," he adds—and you can feel the throb of exultant triumph in the sentence—"*the Word of God is not bound.*" No, and never can be! Men may imprison the preacher of it; they may immure its heralds and messengers in close-sealed dungeons—but they cannot chain the Word; they cannot immure the Message. They cannot stifle and silence the gospel. Spite of all that men can do, the Word of God will run and have free course and be abundantly glorified. "The Word of God is not bound."

Now, I want to lift this phrase out of its context. I want to discuss it, not in the particular application Paul makes of it, but as a general truth. My subject is, shall I say, the irrepressibility of the gospel. It defies all attempts to check, frustrate and limit it. "The Word of God is not bound."

The Word of God is *not bound to men.* That is to say, the progress of the gospel is not bound up with the life and activity of any man, however great. It is not dependent even on a Paul. Paul may be imprisoned and silenced, but the gospel holds on its way. The Word of God is not bound. It is a great and sore loss to the Church of Jesus Christ when, say, a Dale, or a Spurgeon, or a Moody, or a Parker, is taken away from the ranks of the Churches at home, or when a John Williams, or a David Livingstone, or a James Chalmers, is removed from the ranks of the missionaries abroad. But we show ourselves faithless when we talk as if great losses like these were going to stop or retard the work. Great preachers die at home, but there is no halt in the onward march of the gospel. John Williams dies on Erromanga, but from one island to another in the South Seas the good news of the Kingdom is carried. David Livingstone dies in Central Africa, but though Livingstone dies the Word makes its way. James Chalmers is clubbed to death on the Aird River, but Christianity continues its triumphant march in New Guinea. The gospel does not depend for its propagation upon any man, however great. The preacher may be silenced, but his message goes sounding on from

age to age and land to land—" the Word of God is not bound."

If there is one truth written large across the face of the centuries, it is this—that the removal of the preacher never means the stifling of his message. For that is exactly what the foes of the gospel have tried to do in every age—they have tried to suppress the Christian faith by suppressing its advocates; they have tried to chain the Word by chaining its preachers. And every attempt thus made has but served to demonstrate the more clearly its utter hopelessness and futility. Take an illustration or two. Let us go back for our first to the earliest days of the Christian Church. The Book of the Acts tells us how the Sanhedrin addressed themselves to the task of stamping out the Christian faith. And to show they were in grim earnest they seized upon the most eloquent and successful preacher the Christian Church possessed. They laid hold of Stephen, and in the upshot they cast him out of the city and stoned him. But they were soon to find out that the killing of Stephen did not mean the stifling of the gospel. In the very next verse to that which records Stephen's martyrdom I read: "There arose that day a great persecution against the Church which was in Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria. They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word." Instead of destroying the gospel they had propagated it. Instead of stifling Christianity they had spread and

diffused it. Stephen had gone, but Stephen's message reached an ever-widening circuit. "The Word of God was not bound."

Think again of the great official effort Rome made to extinguish the Christian faith when Diocletian and Galerius occupied the Imperial throne. Rome had persecuted the Church before, but previous persecutions had been spasmodic and sporadic. This last persecution, on the other hand, was calculated, deliberate, and universal. The Empire bent all her strength to the task of crushing the Church. Everywhere where the arm of the law could reach chapels were destroyed, Scriptures were burned, prisons were crowded with Christians. And what was the result? Was Christianity extinguished? On the contrary, within twelve years the Empire bowed to the Church and blazoned on her banners the Cross which was the emblem of the Christian faith. Diocletian and Galerius imprisoned, harried and slew without mercy, but "the Word of God was not bound."

Come down to our own England and to later times for another illustration. Amongst the preachers of the gospel whom, in the evil days of Charles II., the State tried to silence was John Bunyan. For twelve years, and those years the years of his prime, he languished in Bedford gaol. He might have had liberty at any time by giving a promise not to preach. But that was a promise John Bunyan dare not make. You remember, perhaps, his wife's reply to the judges before whom she had appeared to plead for her husband's pardon. "Will thy husband leave off preaching?"

said Justice Twisden to her. If so, they would send for him. "My Lord," answered Elizabeth Bunyan, "he dares not leave preaching so long as he can speak." And so this sapient judge, to silence John Bunyan's preaching, resolved to have him kept in prison. He thought that by silencing the preacher he could silence the truth he taught. But in prison John Bunyan wrote his "Grace Abounding" and dreamed his immortal dream of "Pilgrim's Progress to the City Celestial," and by those two undying books he preached the Word to thousands and tens of thousands whom he could never have reached by his voice. They imprisoned John Bunyan, but they could not imprison Bunyan's gospel. The preacher was shut up in Bedford gaol, but the Word he preached ran and had free course. "The Word of God was not bound."

HONOURING ALL MEN

Honour all men.—1 PETER ii. 17.

IT is that word *all* that constitutes the difficulty of this demand. It is the universality involved in it that makes it so hard. "Honour *all* men!" The people in New Guinea as well as the people in England! The denizens of Darkest Africa as well as our fellow-citizens! *All* men! The dwellers in Whitechapel as well as the inhabitants of Mayfair, the poor of Bethnal Green as well as the rich in Belgravia! *All* men! The servant as well as the master, the maid as well as the mistress; the employed as well as the employer; the illiterate peasant as well as the college don; the sinner as well as the saint! It is the uncompromising sweep of the demand that makes it so hard to obey. We find no difficulty in honouring some men. Men of high character and obvious worth—we delight to honour them. But *all* men! Who is sufficient for this? The tramp, the drunkard and the criminal—how can we honour them? The vicious and the filthy, the profligate and the harlot—how are we to honour them?

Let me take an extreme illustration to show how hard the Apostle's demand is. Not very long ago the absorbing sensation of the hour in England was the Houndsditch crime and the Sidney Street battle

which followed. Now, it is easy enough to honour the policemen who were done to death in Houndsditch. London did so honour them with a public funeral; they were brave men who died in the prosecution of their duty. But what about their murderers? What about those desperate men who shed their blood? The papers of the time abounded in fierce expressions of hate and contempt for Fritz and Peter the Painter and their associates in crime! They were mere human vermin to be destroyed without hesitation or remorse! And yet those desperate and bloody men are included in the "all" whom the Apostle bids us honour. I have no desire to palliate their crime. It was an appalling crime! I am far from saying that people were wrong in demanding their punishment. Society has a perfect right to protect itself against frantic rebels of that type. And yet, while recognising their monstrous criminality, and confessing that they deserved to die, if the Apostle is to be believed, there is something even in reckless and bloodstained criminals like those that can claim our honour: something even in those abandoned men that has a claim upon our respect. "Honour *all* men!" I confront myself with a concrete case of this kind and I know that the Apostle makes a tremendous demand and one which it is tremendously hard to obey. And yet obey it we must if we want to have the mind which was also in Christ Jesus.

For Peter here is really only putting the practice of Christ into a precept. This is what Christ did

during His earthly life—He honoured all men This was indeed the thing above all others that differentiated Him from everyone else of His own day and time. The good people of Palestine in Christ's day never dreamed of honouring *all* men. On the contrary, there were certain folk whom they regarded only as objects of their scorn and contempt. They did honour to the pious Pharisee who made broad his phylacteries and prayed in the corners of the streets. But the "publicans and sinners" they treated as the filth and offscouring of all things. And one of the things that scandalised the Jews in the conduct of Christ was the fact that He declined to fall in with the prevailing practice. He gathered up these outcasts and befriended them. So they called Him in scorn "the friend of publicans and sinners." That was the most noticeable feature in the conduct of Christ, He had room in His affection and regard for those whom everyone else cast out. He "honoured *all* men." He honoured Matthew the publican by calling him to be one of the Twelve; He honoured Zacchæus, the chief publican, by going to dine in his house and calling him a son of Abraham; He honoured the woman who was a sinner by calling her "daughter" and speaking in her defence before Simon and his assembled guests; He honoured that frivolous and sensual woman of Samaria by condescending to speak to her and revealing Himself to her; He honoured even that wretched woman who was dragged by a brutal mob into His presence in that, while everyone else flung

their coarse accusations at her without any sense of pity for her polluted womanhood, He, and He alone, hung His head for shame! That was characteristic of Him all His life through. Palestine, in His day, had its share of wastrels and ne'er-do-weels, of sunken and degraded people, and Christ came into close contact with them. But you will search the gospels in vain for any word of contempt or scorn from His lips. Instead of scorning them, He befriended them. He gave them respect, affection, love. He "honoured" *all* men.

You remember that great passage in Paul's Epistle to the Romans in which he contrasts the *righteous* man with the *good* man, and both with God in Christ. You may say that in it Paul is giving us the various degrees of love. He begins with the *righteous* man. The righteous man's ideal is justice. He is for giving every man his due. The righteous man is not given to *love*. Love he would probably regard as needless sentiment. If there is love at all in him, it is in its most elementary stage. Then Paul passes on to the *good* man. The *good* man is an immense advance upon the righteous man. The *good* man is not simply just, he is *kind*. He is affectionate. No deserving case ever appeals to him in vain. Tell him about any poor soul who is in need or trouble and he is quick to sympathise and help.

But it is not in the good man you get love in the superlative degree. There is a width, a depth, a reach in love beyond that of which the good

man is ordinarily capable. For love in the superlative degree you must go to God—"God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died." That is love's last word. "While we were yet sinners Christ died." His love stooped to the undeserving and the evil. It lavished itself upon the wide world; there was not anyone anywhere outside its scope. If I may so express it, the marvellous thing about Jesus was this—He loved the very Calibans of the race. "He died," Paul says, "for *all*." For all without exception. He saw something in the most brutalised and bestialised of men that made Him love them well enough to die for them. He could have shown His "honour" for men, for *all* men, in no more striking or convincing way. He honoured even the worst and vilest enough to make Him think it worth His while to die for them. The Cross is just the measure of Christ's honour for mankind. And if in this, as in other respects, Christ has left as an example that we should follow His steps, then we too, if we would learn to be real Christians, must learn to "honour all men."

Now, I do not think the Bible ever lays upon us an unreasonable command, nor do I believe our Lord Himself ever did an unreasonable thing. He honoured all men, and if the command is laid upon us to honour all men, it is because there is something in man that deserves our honour. Can we tell what that something is? Can we discover the reasonableness of it? I think we can.

Honouring All Men

When Christ looked upon men, what did He see? Ordinary men saw simply the grossness, and vileness and beastliness of the Calibans of life. But Jesus saw more. He knew what was in man, the old Book says. Everybody could see the brutish conduct, everybody could see the vice and shame. But Jesus looked beyond the outward conduct to the heart, and in the hearts even of these Calibans He saw potencies and possibilities of good. As our old hymn put it, He saw "feelings lay buried which grace could restore." You remember Browning's lines in which he expresses his robust faith that in the worst of men there is something good. He sees men

> All with a touch of nobleness, despite
> Their error, upward tending all, though weak:
> Like plants in mines which never saw the sun;
> But dream of him, and guess where he may be
> And do their best to climb and get to him.

Well, our Lord had that faith before Browning. He saw some good, even in the worst of men—"all with a touch of nobleness"—and He loved and honoured them for that. All men were made in the image of God. In multitudes of them the image had been sadly defaced, overlaid with selfishness and sin, but in none was it entirely destroyed or wholly lost. And Jesus loved and honoured *all* men, because in all He saw some touch or trace of the Divine.

And that is why we, too, must honour *all men*. No man is wholly bad. Indeed, life is continually surprising us by revelations of goodness in unex-

pected places. Selfish and sordid natures will on supreme occasions flash out with all the glories of self-sacrifice. A "sudden splendour" often reveals itself in the conduct of persons whom we perhaps judged to be base and mean. There is a soul of goodness in things evil, we are told; and there is a soul of goodness also in evil men. There is some touch of the Divine in the most degraded and sunken. It is that Divine touch that has the claim upon our reverence. Let us think of that and honour all men.

But Christ honoured all men, not simply for what they were in themselves, He honoured them also for what they were to God. Even the worst and vilest of them were children of God—wandering and rebellious children, it is true, but still children, children dear to the Father's heart; children for whom the Father was willing to suffer and sacrifice. The publican was God's child. The robber was God's child. The harlot in her shame was God's child. And Christ honoured them for that.

And that is why we too must honour all men. And that is *how* we shall be able to honour all men —by remembering that they are all God's children. There are certain terms in current use in these days which tend to breed contempt for men. They obscure their real and essential dignity. We speak of them as "hands"; we lump them together and speak of them as "the masses"; some in their scorn for the squalid poor call them the "*canaille*." But these are terms that ought to be taboo to the Christian. To men and women who have learned of

Christ, the people are not "hands," they are immortal souls; they are not "*canaille*" they are the sons and daughters of Almighty God. It is by a constant remembrance of man's relation to God that we shall be able to walk through life not "mailed in scorn," but seeing something to reverence and honour in every man and woman we meet, because even in the broken and battered wrecks of humanity we see children of the love of God, brothers and sisters for whom Christ died.

Because as He is, even so are we in this world.—
1 JOHN iv. 17.

"As He is—so are we"—there is to be a correspondence, the Apostle says, between the Master and the disciple, between Christ and His people. We are to reproduce in our lives the spirit and characteristics that marked Him in His earthly life. It is a challenging sort of demand and it drives us to the painful but fruitful work of self-examination. "As He is—so are we"—is it true?

One of the great characteristics of Christ, for instance, was His Peace. Peace was one of the things He came to give. The prophet spoke of Him as the Prince of Peace. The angels sang on His birthnight "Peace on earth." His purpose in visiting earth was to preach peace to them that were afar off and to them that were nigh. And the gospel which His messengers were charged to proclaim was, above everything else, a gospel of peace. But Christ not only came to give peace, He possessed it. Indeed, no one can give what he does not possess; Christ was only able to give it because He possessed it. "*My* peace," He said to His disciples—and it was His last will and testament—"I give unto you."

"*My* peace"—and what kind of peace was it that Christ possessed? Well, for answer to that

question we cannot do better than turn to the account of the great storm that overtook Him and His disciples on the Lake of Galilee. Let me read Mark's version of it: "And leaving the multitude they take Him with them, even as He was, in the boat. And there ariseth a great storm of wind and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling and He Himself was astern, asleep upon the pillow." Could you have a more perfect picture of peace? The winds roaring, the sea raging, the ship filling—and *Jesus asleep!* And that illustrates precisely the nature of Christ's peace. It was a peace in the midst of the storm. It was a deep, central calm, "though all without tumultuous seemed." It was a peace that nothing could disturb.

What are the things in life which are most calculated to destroy peace? Well, here is one thing—Poverty. Was Christ a poor man? Yes, as poor as a man could be. He had no money to pay His taxes. He had not where to lay His head. Did His poverty disturb His peace? Not in the slightest. "Be not anxious," He said to the listening crowd, and He had first of all learned the lesson Himself, "what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink or wherewithal ye shall be clothed—*your Father knoweth.*" And here is another thing that tends to disturb and destroy peace—the opposition and hate of men. Did Christ experience that? Yes, He did. He was the despised and rejected of men. He came to His own and His own received Him not. And yet it was on the eve

of that bitter day when the rejection and hate of men were to find their expression in the Cross, that Jesus talked about *His peace.* Neither poverty nor trouble could disturb the serenity of His soul.

"As He is," says the Apostle, "so are we in this world." Is that true? Is it true in this matter of *peace?* I find, on looking through the Epistles, that "peace" is a mark of the Christian. "The Kingdom of God is righteousness, *peace,* and joy in the Holy Ghost." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace.*" Does it mark us? Does the peace of God which passeth all understanding garrison our hearts in Christ Jesus? Are we possessed of our Lord's central calm? Whatever be the circumstances of life, are we able to rest in the Lord? When I look out upon the world it is a *restless* world I see. Men are harassed by anxiety; they are consumed with care. They fret and worry themselves, saying, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" And trouble and disappointment drive them clean distracted. And all too often the Christian disciple is just as anxious and as worried as the man of the world. We are just as hot and eager for the good things of this life. We are just as much broken and distracted by trouble and disappointment. Men do not wonder at our peace. They do not stand amazed at our calm. No—it is not true—"as He is, so are we." We have forgotten Christ's secret of *peace.* And there is no prayer it would more benefit us to offer than this:

Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
  While these hot breezes blow ;
Be like the night's dew's cooling balm
  Upon earth's fevered brow.
Calm in the hour of buoyant health,
  Calm in my hour of pain,
Calm in my poverty or wealth,
  Calm in my loss or gain ;
Calm as the ray of sun or star,
  Which storms assail in vain ;
Moving unruffled through life's war,
  The eternal calm to gain.

The world would soon be won if only we were like Christ in this respect and His peace garrisoned our hearts.

And here is a second characteristic of our Lord—His *joy*. I do not think we often associate joy with our Lord. And yet surely that was one of His "marks"—*a deep and constant joyfulness* When we picture Jesus we think of Him as the "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "For ever on Thy burdened heart," our hymn says, "A weight of sorrow hung." And yet, to think of Christ only as a Man of Sorrows would be to form a partial and one-sided estimate of His character. He was also a "Man of Joy." In that same chapter in which He bequeathed to His disciples "His peace," He gave them also "His joy." "These things," He says, "have I spoken unto you, that *My joy* may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled." As if to say their joy could never be full and real till *His joy* had been imparted to them. And in His great intercessory prayer this is one of the petitions He offers.

"These things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

We mistake, if we always associate Jesus with ideas of sorrow and misery and pain I would not, perhaps, care to associate the idea of mirth with Jesus, but He had something better and deeper than mirth, He had joy. And that joy was constant and unbroken. Jesus lived above the region of clouds and storm—with His soul it was always "sacred, high, eternal noon." Look at Him on the night before He died: "And He went out into the Mount of Olives," says the evangelist. And what did He do before He went out? "He sang a hymn." And what were the words of that hymn? These: "Return into thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." He sang a hymn of exultation and triumph. Within a few hours of the spitting and the scourging and the Cross He sang a hymn! Our Lord was a Man of Joy, and the height of blessedness for you and me is that we may enter into the joy of our Lord. I turn to the Epistles and I find "joy" included in every list of the "marks" of the Christian. "The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, *joy*." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, *joy*, peace." Indeed, the call to "rejoice" peals like a great bell from one end of the apostolic literature to the other. Listen to these sentences from the apostle Paul: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice." "Rejoice evermore." "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." And a few verses further on he says, in the same letter to the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord

alway, and again I say, rejoice." Notice, the Christian is supposed to be in possession of the secret of perpetual joy. "Rejoice evermore," says the apostle. "Rejoice alway!" He is to be always happy, sunny, triumphant. What is the opposite to joy? Sorrow. But, according to the apostles, Christian joy is to surmount and conquer sorrow. The Christian rejoices in his sufferings. He sings songs at midnight. He is sorrowful—yet always rejoicing. And there is something more terrible even than sorrow—death. But the apostle's joy triumphed over death. "To die is gain," I hear him say. "To depart and be with Christ is far better." "Thanks be to God Who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And, when his end drew very near he met it with a cheerful gladness. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day." Yes, Paul went out to the block with a shining face and his heart full of music and of song, and, as he laid his head down, he said, like the brave and good John Eliot, "Welcome joy, welcome joy!" Paul was like his Lord, a man who lived in the sunshine—a man of joy!

"As He is—so are we," says the evangelist. Is that true? Is it true in this matter of "joy"? Have we entered into the "joy of the Lord"? Is the joy of the Lord our strength? We sometimes say in our hymn, "We feel like singing all the time." Do we say that with a doleful face? Would anybody guess from our demeanour and

conduct that our hearts were bubbling over with song? Are we glad, sunny, triumphant, happy Christians? When I was in Canada some time ago I spent a few days in the Rocky Mountains, and, in company with friends, I tramped miles and miles through the forests and among those glorious hills. The trees were just beginning to turn, and their yellow and scarlet colours made up a scene I shall never forget. But I will tell you one thing I noticed about those vast Canadian forests. They were *songless.* I missed the blackbird and the thrush and the other songsters that make our English woods so full of melody. With the exception of the chattering of the squirrels, those great forests of the Rockies in October were silent. And I have thought many a time that the religion of very many of us is like those Canadian forests—it is songless and joyless. There is no gladness, no sunshine, no triumph about it. People might be excused for thinking that our religion was sad and doleful and gloomy. And do you not think that may in some measure account for our impotence? People are not drawn to us because we lack "joy." They crowded to Jesus Christ. Little children, sick folk, publicans and sinners, they all crowded to Jesus, so that there was no room, not even about the door—He was so full of hope and brightness and sunshine. They would crowd to us, too, if only we were like Him. In the interests of our work there is nothing we need more than to be able to enter into the "joy of our Lord."

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE

Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby.—MATT. vii. 13.

THE Bible has only one method of classifying people. It takes no count of wealth, or learning, or rank. It classifies men only by *character*. And so it comes to pass that human judgments are often totally reversed and the first are last and the last first. And, further, in this classification by character the Bible knows of only *two classes*, because it knows of only *two characters*. The Bible divides men into godly and ungodly; righteous and unrighteous; good and bad. There are no other classes save these two, and in one or other of them, it asserts, every man must take his stand. All this cuts clean across the grain with us. We do not like such sharp and emphatic divisions. There is an easy tolerance, a kind of good-natured indulgence, amongst us that makes us loth to write down a man as bad. And so, between the good and the bad, we introduce all kinds of gradations and shadings. If people are not definitely good, we hesitate to class them as bad, and so we invent a great middle class—the indifferent, and I suppose that to this middle class we should say that the bulk of mankind belong.

But there is none of this good-natured tolerance and indulgence about the Bible. On this point it is austere and intolerant. It takes no rosewater views. It knows absolutely nothing of the "middling" folk; the "indifferent" people. It recognises no "neutrals." If people are not "good" they are "bad." Society does not like this bald and sharp antithesis. But the Bible recognises no other classes. Scan its pages, and you will see for yourselves this is the one and only division it makes. At the final judgment there are the sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left. "These," says our Lord, "shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Of the ten virgins, five are wise, and five are foolish. Everywhere you find the same sharp and clear-cut division. Indeed, our Lord, in set and specific terms, denied the existence of "middlings" and "neutrals." "He that is not with Me is against Me." And, if you will begin to think of it, you will see the Bible position is the right one. There may be gradations in conduct. But if you pierce behind conduct to motive, you will see there can be only two classes of men. Men must be either for the right or against it. And classification by character is always classification by motive. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

But my purpose is not to defend the Bible classification. I have referred to it only to point out to you that you have exactly the same sharp and sword-like division here. Christ speaks of two gates—by one or other of them men must enter;

two ways—by one or other of them men must travel; two ends—at one or other of them men must arrive. The world speaks of "many" ways. It specially favours a *via media.* But here our Lord, with more than a touch of austerity in His tone, declares there is no middle way. He puts the antithesis sharply and nakedly. There is a wide gate and there is a narrow gate; there is a broad way and there is a straitened way; and there are just two ends, destruction and life. At one or other of these ends every man shall arrive, and what end it shall be depends upon the road he travels.

Let us look more closely at the first of these alternatives. There are here two gates—there is a *broad gate* and there is a *narrow gate.* There is a gate through which it costs a man nothing to enter. He may carry all his lusts and passions and sins along with him through it. He need strip himself of nothing. He need deny himself nothing. It is a wide gate—easy of entrance. And that wide gate is self. When a man follows his own inclinations; gives the reins to the appetites and passions of human nature; deliberately chooses the way of indulgence and pleasure and sin, he is entering in by the wide gate. The fascination and, therefore, the danger of the wide gate is its ease. A man need not struggle to enter in by it. He can drift through it. And the consequence is "many are they that enter in thereby."

But there is also a *narrow* gate. But it is a gate through which no man can enter save by sacrifice

and pain. It is a gate so narrow that a man can take through no passion, no sin, no self-righteousness of his own. He must strip himself of these things. Things that have intertwined themselves with the very fibres of his being he must tear out and cast away. Though they leave him torn and bleeding, he must not shrink. He must "agonise" to enter in by the strait gate. And that strait gate is Christ.

I am often struck in reading the gospels with what, for lack of a better term, I will call Christ's *frankness*. He makes no secret of the conditions of discipleship. He does not attempt to deck the Christian life out in gay and attractive colours. On the contrary, He scores and underlines and emphasises its hardships and difficulties. He wants no man to follow Him under the impression that he is going to have a pleasant and easy time of it. And so right away at the beginning He confronts him with the "narrow gate" of an exacting demand. "If any man would come after Me," He said, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Self-denial and the Cross—those constitute the "narrow gate" by which a man enters upon the service of Jesus Christ.

I find in the New Testament many suggestions as to the "narrowness" of the gate. For instance, I find St. Paul bidding men "put away" certain things. "Put away," he writes to the Ephesians, "as concerning your former manner of life, the old man which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit." And again, more explicitly and in detail in his

Epistle to the Colossians, "But now put ye away all these—anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth." Why is Paul so insistent that these things should be "put away"? Because no man can pass through the "narrow gate" and carry these things along with him. Put away your anger and your wrath—the gate is too narrow to admit you and your hatreds. Put away your malice—the gate is too narrow to admit you and your jealousies. Put away your railing and shameful speaking—the gate is too narrow to admit you and your follies and uncleannesses. "Without," says John in his Apocalypse, "are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the idolaters, and everyone that loveth and maketh a lie." "Without"—the gate is wide enough to admit any sinner, but it is not wide enough to admit a sinner in his sin. No one can carry his lusts and passions through this strait gate—"without are the dogs." We have to strip ourselves of these cleaving sins of ours, we have to lay aside our own wills, we have to crucify self, if we would enter in by the strait gate. We have to cut off the right hand, we have to pluck out the right eye to do it. We have to agonise to enter in, for it is a narrow gate. It is a narrow gate, and the agony of passing through it has been too much for some. Multitudes followed Christ into the wilderness and partook of His bounty. But when, the next day, He bade them eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man—when, in a word, He bade them come and share His lot if they wished to obtain

eternal life—many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. The gate was too narrow. "Master," said the rich young ruler, "what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And our Lord answered, "If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow Me." And he "went away sorrowful," for he had great possessions. The gate was too narrow. "Thou didst send for me," said Savonarola to Lorenzo the Magnificent, the tyrant of Florence, as he lay on his dying bed. "Yes," said Lorenzo, "for three sins lie heavy on my soul," and then he told the monk how he was tortured by the remembrance of the sack of Volterra, and his robbery of a bank whereby many poor girls had lost their all and been driven to a life of shame, and the bloody reprisals he took after a political conspiracy against him. "God is good," replied Savonarola, "God is merciful. But," he at once added, "three things are needful." "What things?" asked Lorenzo, anxiously. "First, a great and living faith in God's mercy." "I have the fullest faith in it," replied the dying man. "Secondly, you must restore all your ill-gotten wealth." At this Lorenzo writhed, but at last he gave a nod of assent. "Lastly," said Savonarola to the cowering prince, "you must restore to Florence her liberty." And Lorenzo angrily turned his back upon the preacher and said never a word. The gate was too "narrow."

The gate is still a "narrow" gate. The entrance

into the way of life is by the strait gate of penitence and renunciation. If men could carry the world along with them, if young people could carry their love of pleasure along with them, multitudes would crowd into the gate of the Kingdom. But to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof is too hard a command. To put away the old man with his deeds is more than they can bring themselves to do. The gate is "narrow." That is why Christ added that solemn word, "few there be that find it."

THE PROPHECY OF CHRISTMAS

That where I am, there ye may be also.—JOHN xiv. 3.

CHRISTMAS is more than a festival of remembrance, it is also a great festival of hope. Christmas comes to me burdened with the prophecy and promise of all kinds of good things to come. And amongst the rest I find in Christmas the prophecy of a *perfected humanity*. Christ is more than the revealer and reflection of God, He is also the revealer of *man*. In Him you find the example and pattern of what *man was meant to be*. Leave Jesus Christ out of account and what are you to make of man? What a puzzle and contradiction he is! With a mind that can read the secrets of nature like an open book, that can soar into the regions of the Infinite and the Eternal, yet with passions and lusts that degrade him to the level, aye and below the level, of the brute. Capable at times of a love and self-sacrifice God-like in their sublimity, and capable, also, at times of cruelty which is fiendlike and devilish. Capable of aspirations after what is lofty and pure and holy, and capable also of wallowing in the filthy sty of sensuality and lust. Look at the glaring contrasts humanity presents. On the one hand, it can present us with men who,

for their saintliness, deserve the name "Friends of God"; and, on the other hand, it has produced men whose track in life can be traced by the ghastly ruin they have made. Out of the same humanity there have come thinkers like Plato and heroes like Paul, and brutish and insensate men like Vitellius and Claudius, whose god was their belly and whose glory was in their shame. Out of the same human nature there came, on the one hand, our Livingstones and Gilmours and Crossleys and Toynbees, and, on the other hand, the profligates and drunkards that disgrace and defile our streets to-day. And not only do we find such contradictions between different men. You find these amazing contrasts and contradictions within the limit of the individual life. The very same man seems to belong to both heaven and hell. At one time we see God in him; at another we see the tiger and the ape. David, the man after God's own heart, the man whose soul was athirst for God, the living God, was yet swept by his lust into foul and abominable wickedness. Solomon, the wisest of men, beguiled by fair idolatresses, became a fool and fell away to idols foul. In every man this contradiction exists—Abraham, the father of the faithful, broke down in his trust; Moses, the meekest of men, fell into a passion at Meribah. Peter, the man who, for his vision of faith, was pronounced blessed by the Lord, turned coward and denier in the judgment hall. In face of all this, what are you to make of man? Does he belong to heaven or to the dust? Is he nearer

akin to God or to the tiger and the ape? It is easy to see glimpses of grandeur and greatness about him, but the baseness and brutishness are as prominent as the grandeur. What are we to make of man? What is he meant to be?

Christmas day supplies me with the answer to the question. Jesus Christ is Man as He is meant to be. Jesus is the pattern, ideal, representative Man. Plato long ago gave expression to his theory of *ideas*. He taught that before this world came into existence as a fact it existed in the Divine Mind as an Idea. This spiritual *idea* was the pattern of which the visible world was the expression. Everything we see is but the copy of this heavenly original. Well, if I may adapt Plato's theory, Jesus was God's *idea* for humanity. The old Bible story says that the *idea* was first expressed in Adam. But sin soon entered in and defaced the pattern and the *ideal of humanity*. God's intention with regard to humanity was lost sight of until

> . . . . the Word had breath and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds,
> In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought.

Stopford Brooke compares humanity to a beautiful statue which had been shattered and the parts dispersed. In one place there was an arm, and in another a foot; here a torso, and there a broken hand. There was a beauty and glory even about these broken fragments, and from them men tried to guess what the

perfect statue must have been like. At last, the various portions were brought together into one museum, and an artist suggested that they were all of them fragments of one statue, and he set to work joining the several portions to each other until the statue grew into perfection and completeness—and other men saw what was the *idea* of the artist in all the fulness of its beauty. And so in individual men we see this virtue and that—strength in one, tenderness in another; energy in one, patience in another; justice in one, mercy in another. But in Jesus Christ all these scattered virtues unite and combine, and the perfect ideal of a complete humanity stands revealed. Jesus is the Pattern Man; the Representative Man. The Second Adam is the Man from heaven. Anselm gave to his great book on the Atonement the title "*Cur Deus Homo?*" Why did God become a man? Well, partly, at any rate, to let the world see what humanity was capable of, what man was meant to be. We look at Jesus and we know. He is the master-light of all our seeing. "Christ's is the ideal character," says Lecky, "which, through all the changes of the centuries, has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love."

But Christ is more than the revelation of what man was meant to be, He is also the *prophecy of what man shall be.* The sight of perfection is not always an inspiration, it is often a discouragement. Perfection seems so utterly beyond our grasp that we give up even trying to reach it. But the peculiarity of Jesus is this—that though Perfect, He is also imitable. As

Principal Griffith-Jones puts it, "the One who has fired men to the highest holiness of character is just the One of all others who has impressed the world with His own unapproachable grandeur and perfection of nature." The fact is, Jesus is not simply Ideal. He is also Dynamic. He is not simply a mark outside of us, He is a power within us. And so Jesus becomes to men the pledge and promise of that perfect character which He Himself exemplifies. Where He is, there shall we be also, not simply in the matter of place, but also in the matter of attainment and character. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Christmas is a prophecy—into the glory revealed in the life then begun Christ will lead His brethren. Into the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ we shall all of us one day grow. It is a prophecy of which in part we see the fulfilment even now. We see men being changed into the image of Christ from glory to glory. We see sinners, through the power of Christ, being changed into saints. We see the cowardice of a Peter changed into courage; we see the fierce temper of a John changed into love; we see the greed of a Zacchæus changed into generosity. We see a profane swearer like John Bunyan changed into a dreamer of holy dreams; and a rake like Colonel Gardiner changed into a man of chaste and holy life; and a drunken criminal like Jerry McAuley changed into a gospel preacher. With our own eyes we see the mark of the beast wiped out of the characters and faces of men and women and the

mark of the Lord Jesus take its place. We see these things with our own eyes—human nature growing into the purity and grace and holiness of Christ Himself. And, though we do not see the gracious work fully accomplished down here, what we *do* see warrants us in the belief that finished and perfected it certainly will be. There will come a time when we shall stand before God without blemish and without spot. We shall wash our robes absolutely and entirely *white* in the blood of the Lamb. We shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father.

And so, Christmas Day fills one with a blessed hope. It is a prophecy of glory for you and me. When I think of Jesus I do not despair of humanity. I look to a time when we shall be free from sin and purged from stain. I look to a time when we shall be redeemed for ever from imperfection and failure. Our imperfections and our failures oppress us here; our sins well-nigh break our hearts. But the day of our complete and perfect redemption draweth nigh. Where He is, there shall we be also. That is the glorious destiny in store for us! Christ will restore this marred and broken humanity of ours to its original dignity and grandeur. He will not cease His work upon us until He has changed us into His own image. You remember the prayer expressed in our hymn:

> Finish, Lord, Thy new creation,
> Pure, unspotted may we be;
> Let us see Thy great salvation,
> Perfectly restored in Thee:

Changed from glory into glory;
Till in heaven we take our place;
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.

It is a prayer that will be answered! Where Jesus is there we too shall one day be. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

CONVERSION

Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.—2 CHRON. xvi. 6.

THAT is a suggestive remark of the great French preacher, Bossuet, which is quoted by the late Dean Farrar in his commentary on the passage—"He built," says Bossuet of Asa's action, "the fortresses of Judah out of the ruins of those of Samaria, and thus set the example of making a holy use of hostile and heretical materials." The stones and timber meant to be used for the enslavement and oppression of Judah were actually employed for its preservation and defence. What was designed to further an evil purpose was actually used to further a good end. The point I want to emphasise is that the *materials were the same.* But they were *converted in their use.* From being instruments of evil they were changed into instruments of beneficence. In all this you have an illustration of what Jesus Christ does with a man and his powers. Jesus Christ does not destroy—He *converts.* And this is what conversion means. It signifies, not the destruction of any human energies, but their turning to new and beneficent ends. Christ does not put any gift or power under the ban, but He takes the man as he is, with all the powers and

gifts he possesses, and those gifts and powers once used in the service of sin He employs now in the service of God. The whole philosophy of conversion is in that verse of the Epistle to the Romans: "For, as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification." Notice the same "members" which once were servants of uncleanness and iniquity are now to be the servants of righteousness. Those members, which were once the servants of uncleanness and iniquity, are not to be cut off and destroyed—they are to be cleansed and purified and converted. The very same powers that once plunged man deeper and deeper into iniquity are now to become the instruments of his sanctification. And it is the same truth that is set forth in parable in this story of the building of Geba and Mizpah with the stones and timbers of Ramah.

There have been, and are still, false ideas of conversion abroad. Conversion with a great many carries with it the idea still of impoverishment and annihilation. There are certain qualities that people feel ought to have no place in the character of a converted man. In reading a review of a new book about the sea and seamen, I came across an illustration of what I mean. There was a fisherman named Nazareth Lute, in one of the fishing villages of Newfoundland, who, in his unregenerate days, was steeped in the "sin of unfailing jollity." But from one voyage he came home changed. He had

seen the Lord God Almighty "a-frowning in a cloud," he said. And from that day Nazareth Lute put the sin of jollity from him and lived a life of unrelieved fear and gloom. Now, there you have an illustration of a false idea of conversion. The great change to that ignorant fisherman meant the destruction and annihilation of his most conspicuous and most precious gift. But it cannot be too clearly or emphatically stated that Christ destroys no gift. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. He came not to narrow and impoverish life but to give it, and give it in abundance. The Buddhistic goal is that of annihilation. Nirvana, the extinction of all individuality, is the mark of the Buddhist's high calling. But the Christian goal is the precise opposite of that. It does not contemplate the destruction of any power, but its conversion to right uses, and its full and perfect development. For there is not one of the various qualities with which men are dowered which is evil in itself. The qualities themselves are God-given, but they have been prostituted to evil ends. But every one of these qualities may be blessed and redeemed, and so changed from instruments of iniquity into instruments of righteousness. Out of every Ramah some Geba or Mizpah may be built.

You, perhaps, remember what Savonarola did in Florence at Carnival time. Amongst the so-called delights of Carnival time was a day when the children of Florence seem to have had free leave to throw stones. It was a stupid custom, it was a

dangerous custom, it was a wicked custom, and it was one of the customs Savonarola resolved to stop. But it was not a ruthless policy of repression that the reformer adopted. He knew that the delight of stone-throwing consisted in the vent it gave for boyish energy. So Savonarola resolved the boys should still have plenty of scope for their energies, but he resolved that their energies should be turned into a useful channel. Instead of employing themselves in flinging stones to the danger of life and limb, Savonarola drilled these children, and sent them through the streets of Florence singing "Jesus Christ is King," and collecting alms for the poor. Their boyish energy was not repressed—it was simply converted to right uses.

And that is exactly how Jesus Christ acts with men. Scientists talk about the "Conservation of Energy." Energy, they say, may change its form and change its direction, but no energy is ever lost. There is a "conservation of energy," too, in the realms of religion. Christ never destroys any human force or energy. He simply changes its direction. He conserves but converts it.

Think of some of the men whom Christ has laid hold of and see what He has done with them. He found Matthew at the place of toll, and the mere fact that Matthew was a tax collector shows him to have been a man of some learning and intellectual gifts. What did Christ do with Matthew? Did He put his learning and intellectual gifts under the ban? Not at all. These were good gifts, only turned to bad uses. Jesus conserved

the gifts and converted them. He used these gifts—once employed in unholy work—for the service of God. So that Matthew the tax collector became Matthew the inspired evangelist. Take the case of Simon the Zealot. The chief characteristic of Simon was his burning patriotism, his intense hatred of Rome, his country's oppressor, his headlong and enthusiastic zeal in the national cause. What did Jesus do with Simon's patriotism and passionate hate and burning zeal? Destroy them? Oh, no! He converted them. He turned them into right channels and directed them to worthy ends. Simon did not become less patriotic, but his patriotism now took the form of a desire to save Israel from her spiritual enslavement; hate still burned in his breast—but it was no longer a hate of the Roman, it was a burning and consuming hatred of sin; his zeal was as ardent as ever, but it was no longer a zeal for a Jewish Empire, it was a consuming zeal for the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Think of Paul. What a bundle of great qualities Paul was. He had a keen mind, he was the first scholar in Gamaliel's school. He was a mine of Rabbinical learning, head and shoulders above any of his contemporaries. He was a man of intense and earnest spirit—doing nothing by halves—flinging himself altogether into every task he took in hand, so that the Church knew no more fiery and bitter persecutor than he—"for zeal, persecuting the Church." Well, when Christ laid hold of Paul, what did He do with him? Did He proceed

to empty and impoverish Paul's nature? Did He lop off and destroy some of those great qualities of his? Not at all. Christ preserved them all and turned them to Divine use. I read Paul's letter to the Romans, and I find there the same keen mind that made him the first in Gamaliel's school; I read his allegory of Hagar and Mount Sinai, and I see there that same Rabbinical lore that made him the envy and pride of his contemporaries; I read of those marvellous missionary journeys of his, and I find there that same intensity of spirit, which once sent him to Damascus to lay waste the Church, now sending him to the lands far away to seek and to save. Think of Augustine. Before Christ had laid hold upon him, Augustine had made a name for himself. At the Universities of Africa and in Milan, Augustine was known as a keen and brilliant logician and lawyer. What did Christ do with Augustine's power of logic and rhetoric? Destroy it? Not at all. He simply converted it. The keen and subtle logic once employed in the defence of the heresy of the Manichæans, was devoted henceforth to the exposition and defence of the Christian faith. Think of Luther. Luther's was a singularly rich nature. He had humour, he had poetry, he had song, he had the gift of blunt, vigorous speech. When Christ laid hold of Luther, what did He do with these qualities of his? Destroy them? Not at all. He made use of them all for the highest ends. Humour, poetry, song, his gift of direct and blunt speech—they were all used in the work of the

blessed Reformation, and without them Luther would never have accomplished the work he did. And so I might go on illustrating, but I have said enough. Christ never destroys a gift or an energy. He converts it. He changes the servants of sin into servants of righteousness. Out of the materials of which Ramah was built He builds Geba and Mizpah. He has room and can make use of every gift.

What is your gift? The gift of music? Very well. Christ wants that music of yours. I know music is often used as an incitement to sin, but He can use it as a help to righteousness. John Wesley used to pick up all the popular tunes of his day—tunes often associated with ribald words—and employed them in his services set to hymns in praise of God. "Why should the devil have all the good music?" he used to say. If music is your gift, bring it. Christ can use it. "I sing," Jenny Lind used to say, "for God."

What is your gift? Humour? Very well. Bring it—Christ can make use of it. Christ wants your merriment and light-heartedness. There is room for laughter in religion. "Rejoice always." I think of a man like Peter Mackenzie bubbling over with humour, putting that humour at the service of God and laughing men out of sin to righteousness.

What is your gift? Business skill? Very well. Bring it. Christ can make use of it. You can use that business skill of yours for Him. You can put it at His service in the shop where you labour.

You can come and use it in the management and direction of the affairs of His Church. There is no gift which Christ casts out as waste. There is no single energy which He demolishes and destroys. He wants the whole man—with every ounce of power he possesses. Christ does not annihilate. He converts. The stones and timber once used for some Ramah of sin He can use for some Geba and Mizpah of righteousness.

The instrument of oppression changed into an instrument of defence! Geba and Mizpah built out of the ruins of Ramah! What a wonderful transformation was that! But it is a mere shadow of the transformations Christ effects. What is the building of a Mizpah out of the ruins of a Ramah compared to the making of a man of generous heart out of Zacchæus the miser; or a woman of holy life out of the woman who was a sinner; or the greatest of Christian missionaries out of Saul, the fiercest of persecutors; or a brave and intrepid martyr out of Henry Barrow, the gay and profligate courtier; or an evangelical preacher out of John Newton, the blaspheming slave-captain; or a Temperance Great-heart out of Gough, the drunken outcast? Christ can make heroes, prophets, martyrs, out of men whose lives sin has left in ruins.

POWER

For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline.—2 TIM. i. 7.

THERE are two sentences in these opening verses of St. Paul's second letter to his son in the faith, Timothy, which show me quite plainly that that same Timothy was in danger of losing his soul in Ephesus. This is one of them. "Be not ashamed, therefore, of the testimony of our Lord or of me, his prisoner." "Be not *ashamed!*" Now, remember, Paul was never in the habit of combating imaginary perils; he took no pleasure in setting up men of straw for the mere delight of knocking them down again. What then does this appeal to Timothy not to be "ashamed" imply? It implies this, that Timothy, like Faithful in John Bunyan's allegory, came near to being beaten off his religion altogether in Ephesus "for shame." It means that Timothy was half ashamed of being known as Paul's friend; it means something more serious still, it means that, in that great city where fashion, prestige, and society were all on the side of Diana, Timothy grew half ashamed of being known as a disciple of Jesus. Yes, Timothy in Ephesus all but fell under that stern and solemn condemnation which our Lord pronounced upon all them that are ashamed of Him and His words.

And the second sentence that suggests to me that Timothy was in dire peril in Ephesus is the first verse of the second chapter. "God," says Paul to him, "gave us not the spirit of fearfulness." Only *fearfulness* is too mild a word to represent the Greek original. This is rather how it should read: "God gave us not the spirit of *cowardice*." But why does Paul talk to Timothy about *cowardice?* Because that ugly thing was Timothy's danger. He had been sent to Ephesus to deal with certain difficulties in the Church, but, apparently, he was showing himself unequal to the task entrusted to him. He shrank from the duty incumbent upon him because of the unpleasantness its performance would entail. His natural gentleness was becoming weakness; his tenderness was degenerating into timidity. Timothy was in danger of losing his crown and becoming a castaway in Ephesus through cowardice.

But cowardice has no place in the character of the Christian man. Indeed, it is safe to say that, to the coward, the Christian life is impossible. Do you remember God's repeated counsel to Joshua when he was about to undertake the task of leadership? "Be strong and of a good courage," He said. And once again, "Only be strong and very courageous." And yet again, "Be strong and of a good courage." There is no following Christ and doing God's will without courage. But this courage which is so necessary God supplies. It is one of the bestowments of the Holy Ghost. "He makes the coward spirit brave." Holy Ghost men

are never limp, nerveless, fearful. They are marked by force, and fire, and energy. They are characterised by a holy audacity, a superb confidence. Conscious they have an Almighty Power with them, diffidence and fear vanish, and they say "We can do all things."

Now Timothy was a man who was supposed to have received the Holy Ghost. Here Paul appeals to him to give evidence of that great bestowment. "If we live by the Spirit," he writes to the Galatian converts, "by the Spirit let us also walk." Let our everyday life—that is the meaning of that appeal—prove our possession of that energising and enabling Spirit. It is the same appeal Paul makes to Timothy here. Timothy was showing himself weak and timid. He distrusted himself. He was shirking duty because he did not feel he was equal to it. As a matter of fact he was forgetting "the mighty God who feeds the strength of every saint." He was forgetting that Spirit whose work it is to help our infirmities. And Paul is here reminding him of that Spirit's bestowment. He was not alone in Ephesus. He had the Spirit to enable him and, therefore, there was no place for timidity or fear. "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee, for God gave us not a spirit of cowardice, but of power and love and discipline."

Now, I want to transport myself from Ephesus, in the first century, to England, in the twentieth. This word of Paul's to Timothy—this bracing, tonic word—is a word for you and me. Cowardice

is an ugly thing, but in the spiritual realm it can be laid to the charge of a great many of us. And cowardice always and inevitably means weakness. Fearfulness spells impotence. The man who distrusts himself is paralysed by his distrust and accomplishes nothing. "I was afraid," said the man in the parable, "and went and hid thy talent in the earth." There you have, in a sentence, the disabling effects of fear. Notice the sequence—fearfulness and an unused talent; timidity and impotence. There is no "go" or force about the fearful man; all his strength is drained away by his own hesitations and timidities. But hesitation and timidity ought to have no place in the character of the Christian man. For he has to reinforce him a Spirit of resistless energy and infinite power. Not cowardice, but a dauntless courage and a superb confidence ought to be the mark of the Christian man, for God gave us not the spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of discipline.

"Not of cowardice, but of power!" Power is one of the bestowments of the Holy Ghost. That is to say, the Spirit makes a man a forceful personality—it gives him, as we should say, strength of character. Through our ever-multiplying electrical undertakings we are becoming familiarised, in these days, with the word "dynamo." The "dynamo," everyone knows, is the machine which generates the electric current—that mysterious but tremendous force which lights our streets, drives our cars, and runs our machinery. The dynamo is the

generator of all that energy, and, though we may not scientifically understand it, is identified in our minds with the idea of immense and almost irresistible power. Now, the word "dynamo" is exactly the same word as the word translated "power" in the text. "Dynamo" is, indeed, simply the Anglicised form of this Greek word δύναμις. And that, St. Paul says, is what the Spirit is—it is a dynamo, a fountain of energy and force, and its first effect is to give a man a power unknown before. Just as those lamps, which in the daytime are dull and grey, begin at night to burn and shine; just as those cars which stand motionless in the streets are able, seemingly without effort, to breast even steep hills when once brought into contact with the electric current, so exactly, no matter how weak, and limp, and ineffective a man may be, the "dynamo" of the Spirit can charge him with resistless and victorious power. This was the gift our Lord Himself promised. "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And that is always one of the effects of the coming of the Spirit—it replaces the sense of weakness and consequent timidity by a sense of power and consequent courage.

Take the first Pentecost as an illustration of what I mean. A more limp and nerveless set of folk it would have been difficult to discover anywhere than those one hundred and twenty disciples who kept themselves locked up in the upper room for fear of the Jews. Their fear had

a two-fold source. First they were, as Luke says, afraid of the Jews; that is, they were afraid of the persecutions the Jews might inflict upon them; and secondly, they were afraid of themselves; that is to say, they so distrusted their own powers that they had no heart to begin working for Christ. But the Holy Ghost came upon them, and you would not have recognised them for the same men. First of all they ceased to fear themselves, for they were conscious of a new access of force and power. They felt themselves dowered with new capacities of speech, which made them equal to the task of evangelising. And then they lost their fear of the Jews—so that they flung their doors wide open and preached Jesus as both Lord and Christ to the very men who had crucified Him. On that first Pentecost God gave to the disciples in the upper room not the spirit of cowardice, but of *power!*

And there, in type and parable, you get the invariable result of the Spirit's coming. We get a new sense of power, so that *we cease to fear men.* Reinforced by the Spirit, things that once terrified and appalled a man cease utterly to daunt him. Take, for illustration, the case of Peter. If you will turn to the latter chapters of the Gospels the picture of Peter you get there is that of Peter *the coward.* With the rest of the disciples he forsook Christ and fled from the garden. But Peter sinned more deeply than the other disciples sinned. For to his sin of desertion in the garden he added this other, that, in the Judgment Hall, he

denied, with oaths and curses, that he ever knew the Christ. Now, what was the reason of Peter's base and shameful denial? Just this; Peter was afraid of the serving men and women among whom he found himself, he was afraid of having to suffer for Christ's name. The cursing, swearing Peter of the end of the Gospels is Peter the coward! But now pass on a few weeks and you will find Peter in that same Judgment Hall again. Only now he is not in the porch warming himself among the servants, he is in the dock before the very men who condemned his Lord to death. But it was not a coward Peter showed himself that day. He showed himself a stranger to fear that day. Listen: "Now, when they beheld the *boldness of Peter!*" The boldness of Peter! There is a marvel for you. This is a case, as Dr. Jowett has said, of mud changed to marble. The boldness of Peter! Timidity and cowardice had marked him that night in the porch. A superb and dauntless courage marked Peter in the dock. What had happened? God had given His Spirit to Peter, and the Spirit is not a Spirit of cowardice, but of power!

And that is one of the invariable results of the coming of the Spirit. It banishes cowardice. It lifts a man clear above the craven fear of men. It enables him to appear before governors and kings for the Name's sake. Indeed, I may say, the whole history of the noble army of martyrs and confessors is but an illustration of this truth.

And we cease to *be afraid of ourselves.* This fear is always paralyzing. The man who doubts himself

always lacks force and decision and energy. But the Spirit delivers a man from this disabling fear by making him conscious of a new access of power. It lifts men to higher levels so that they fling themselves with courage and confidence into tasks they deemed impossible before. The Spirit came upon Francis in Assisi, so that though he had neither wealth nor station, he entered upon the task of regenerating Italy. It came upon Martin Luther when he was an unknown lecturer on theology in Wittenberg, so that he dared to fling down his challenge to Emperor and Cardinals and Pope. It came upon John Wesley, so that, casting convention and red tape to the four winds, he entered upon the task of evangelizing this kingdom from one end of it to the other. It came upon Robert Morrison so that he addressed himself to the task of carrying the Gospel to China. "Do you imagine you are going to convert China?" asked the captain of the ship in which he sailed, with a sneer. "No," replied Morrison, "but I believe God will." That was it. He had the sense of God, and that banished all diffidence and fear. And that same sense of God —which is only another name for the baptism of the Spirit—banishes all fear and diffidence still. We need shrink from no task. We need cower before no difficulty. We need tremble before no temptation. Greater is He that is with us than all that are against us. We can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us. Be not affrighted therefore, neither be thou dismayed. God has given us not the spirit of cowardice, but of power.

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE OF REPUTATION

But made Himself of no reputation (A.V.). [But emptied Himself (R.V.).]—PHIL. ii. 7.

I HAVE reverted to the rendering of the Authorised Version, though I do not wish to imply that the Authorised Version gives us the more accurate translation. From the standpoint of accuracy and exactitude there can be no dispute that the rendering of the Revised Version, "He emptied Himself," is to be preferred. But, as one of the commentators on this epistle says, the rendering "made Himself of no reputation" is a "marvellous instance of the occasional fitness of a paraphrase unwarranted by the original. It sums up the earthly life of Christ in an unforgettable phrase." That is really why I have preferred it. You can sum up the life of Christ in this phrase: "He made Himself of no reputation." Though, let me add, before I pass on, that I do not subscribe to the commentator's assertion that this rendering is "unwarranted by the original." It is amply warranted by it. It is more than covered by it. It suffers only by way of defect. It is true so far as it goes, but it does not convey *all* the truth set forth by Paul's word in the original. The paragraph from which this verse is taken is that great

and familiar paragraph about the humiliation of Christ. What King James's translators did was to fasten upon one element in our Lord's humiliation. He laid "His reputation" aside. But Christ's humiliation was not confined to one particular like that—it was complete, it was unreserved, it was absolute. Christ did more by far than lay His "reputation" aside; He laid His glory, and His heavenly state, and His Divine attributes all aside. His home had been in Heaven, from all eternity He had lain in the bosom of the Father; but when He undertook the redemption of man, He laid that aside and condescended to be born in a stable and to find His earthly home in a carpenter's shop. In His pre-existent state He had shared in all the glory of God. He did not, however, think that equality with God a prize to be snatched at, but when He took in hand the task of saving men He laid that glory aside and took upon Him the form of a slave. In that heavenly life all the powers and attributes of God had been His, but when He came to earth He laid His knowledge and power all aside and submitted Himself to the limitations and ignorances of our human lot. And the Revised Version, with its translation "emptied Himself," restores to us the idea of the completeness and absoluteness of Christ's humiliation which had, perhaps, been a little obscured by the Authorised Version rendering: "He made Himself of no reputation." And yet, let me say again, that, while the rendering of the Authorised Version suffers by way of narrowness of interpretation and

fails to suggest the extent to which Christ emptied Himself, within its limits it is perfectly true. It is amply warranted by the Greek word which the Apostle used. This was one of the things of which Christ "emptied Himself"—the esteem of His neighbours and contemporaries, His own good name. You remember the familiar passage in which Shakespeare contrasts the value of money and of a good name:

> Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
> 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
> But he that filches from me my good name
> Robs me of that which not enriches him,
> And makes me poor indeed.

Well, your Lord and mine, in the work of saving men, in order that He might accomplish that gracious redeeming work, stooped to that depth of poverty; He surrendered that chiefest and choicest of human possessions; He laid aside His "good name"; He made Himself "of no reputation." In our thought of the sacrifice Christ made in order to win redemption for us we too often limit ourselves to His Cross. I will not utter a single syllable to detract from the solemn and subduing splendour of the Cross. I will not belittle it or obscure it, but rather, with the Apostle, glory in it. At the same time it is necessary to remind ourselves that our Lord's sacrifice was not confined to the Cross. It crowned and consummated itself there; but it did not begin there. Our Lord had been "laying down

His life" from the moment that He was born in the manger. And part of the sacrifice He made in the interests of human redemption was this—and what the sacrifice meant to His sensitive soul who of us can tell?—He consented to be numbered with the transgressors; He took His stand with the publicans and sinners; He became the despised and rejected of men; He stood in the pillory of public shame; He made Himself "of no reputation."

Now, it is about this aspect of our Lord's life and its abiding lesson for His people that I want to speak. "He made Himself of no reputation." *Reputation*, you notice, not character. The two words are often used indiscriminately and treated as synonyms in our popular speech. But they really stand for things essentially different, and ought to be carefully distinguished from each other. The difference between the words at once reveals itself when we recollect the roots from which they spring. *Reputation* comes to us through the Latin, and connects itself with a root which means "to reckon," "to think." *Character* comes to us through the Greek, and connects itself with a word which means "to carve," "to engrave." *Reputation* is what people think of us; *character* is something cut deep, carven into the very fabric of our nature. *Reputation* stands for what a man is supposed to be; *character* stands for what he really is. *Reputation* is in the minds of others; *character* is always in ourselves. *Reputation* is the man as he seems to the world outside; *character* is the essential man as he is to himself and God. I am

far from saying that *reputation* and *character* have no relation to each other; they obviously have; but, nevertheless, they are two totally distinct things, so that a man may have a reputation without a character, or, like Jesus, a character without a reputation. Now, of these two things —*reputation* and *character*—*character* is far and away the more important and vital. It is not what people *think* about a man, but what he *is*, that really matters. For in the end of the day it is what a man really is, in his heart, in the sight of God, that settles his eternal destiny.

And there is this further thing to be said about character—no one can take it away from a man. Character can only be blasted by personal sin. Reputation, on the other hand, depends on the fickle crowd; a breath of slander may shatter it; prejudice and passion may utterly destroy it. It has often happened in the world's history that the best and noblest of men have for a season lost their reputation. It happened so with Christ. He never lost His character. The crowd could not take that away from Him. Only one thing could have destroyed His character, and that was sin. But sin had no place in His life. His was a character without fleck or fault or flaw.

But if Christ kept His character He speedily lost His *reputation*. There was scarcely a libel or a slander that they did not heap upon Jesus. Call to mind some of the things they said about Him in the course of His brief earthly ministry. When He comforted the paralytic's soul by saying "Thy

sins are forgiven thee," the scribes and Pharisees standing by called Him a blasphemer. When He joined in the social joys of the wedding feast and the family meal, they called Him a glutton and a drunkard. When He went and sat at meat at Zacchæus's house, and by so doing brought hope into a despairing soul, they said that in Zacchæus and his kind our Lord found His proper company —they stigmatised Him "friend of publicans and sinners." When He brought healing and relief to those wretched creatures who were regarded as being possessed by evil spirits, they said He was an ally of the devil and did it by the devil's aid— "He hath Beelzebub," they said, "and by the prince of devils casteth He out devils." "Sinner," "glutton," "drunkard," "blasphemer," "devil" —they cast all those names of derision and scorn upon your Lord and mine, and then, in savage contempt, they sentenced Him to a slave's death, and crucified Him with a robber on His right and a robber on His left, as if to suggest that He was the greatest malefactor of the three. I think of our Lord's life ending in such a death, and I find this phrase of my text to be literally true: "He made Himself of no reputation."

And, mind you, this loss of reputation cut our Lord to the very quick. He was of such a loving, sensitive spirit that He felt deeply, vividly, intensely the scorn and contempt of men. Our Lord was no stoic. When He thought of Jerusalem's treatment of Him He burst into a passionate fit of weeping. It hurt Him to be "the despised and the rejected

of men." Why then did He let His reputation go? for clearly He might have kept it had He wished. Our Lord might have basked in the sunshine of popular favour had He wished. Instead of dying on a Cross He might have sat upon a throne, had He wished. "He *made Himself* of no reputation." He emptied Himself. He deliberately chose to let popular favour and esteem go. He deliberately chose to surrender His good name. Why, I ask, did He do it? He did it all to further His work. He did it all at the bidding of that redeeming love which flamed and burned within His soul. Jesus, if I may so express it, let His *reputation* go that He might keep His *character*. He sacrificed public favour that He might be true to Himself and God.

For what was Christ's character? What was our Lord really and essentially? Well, you say the last and deepest thing about Jesus when you say that He was a Saviour. "The Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost." That was our Lord's absorbing passion—to rescue men and women from sin and despair and death. And to be true to this character as Saviour, He let His reputation go. In His eager resolve to save the "lost," He set the conventions and respectabilities all at defiance. When He went to dine with a publican, He knew the kind of thing the respectable folk of Palestine would say about Him. Yet He took the risk. These "outcasts of Israel" could only be saved by a man who stooped right down to them, who made Himself their friend, and who with

warm and eager love clasped their sin-stained hands in His own. And that is exactly what Jesus did. He consented to be pelted with mud, bespattered with slander, deluged with foul abuse—but down to these people sitting in the lowest depths of vice and sin and despair He went. He made himself of no reputation, that He might fulfil His mission as Redeemer. And out of those unfathomable depths of sin and despair He picked up this one and that —here a Mary, there a Levi, yonder a Zacchæus, and set their feet upon a rock and established their goings.

A Jesus careful of His own reputation might perhaps have been a teacher for the few ; He could never have been a Saviour for the world. But He made Himself of no reputation ; He emptied Himself of glory and fame ; He took risks ; He stooped to become the friend of the lowest and the least ; He clasped the hands of the harlot and the thief, and by so doing He has won for Himself worship, glory and honour, as the Redeemer of the race, the Saviour of the world.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION

And he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed ?—ACTS xix. 2.

THERE is one gift that invariably accompanies the bestowment of the Spirit—power. "Ye shall receive power," said our Lord, "when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." They were but a handful of humble Galileans, and that was the task committed to them—the evangelisation of a world! To look at them, those twelve men seemed weakness and insignificance personified. The disproportion between themselves and their work seemed absurd and ludicrous. They themselves felt it! What were they against the world? Who were they, even to face the Jews at their very doors? "Ye shall receive power" said Jesus, "when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And when at Pentecost the Spirit came, the *power* came too. These men, who had kept themselves locked up in the upper room for fear of the Jews, flung their doors open, and began to preach Christ with courage and boldness in the very streets of Jerusalem. And such was the *power* they wielded that on that first Pentecost three thousand souls were subdued and taken captive. And wherever

they went they exerted the same power. They turned the world upside down. They conquered and subdued the world. They inscribed the Cross on the banners of the Roman Empire.

Power is always the mark of the spirit-filled individual or Church. Let the Spirit take possession of Francis, and he takes thousands in Italy captive for Christ. Let the Spirit come upon Luther, and he makes religion real to half a continent. Let the Spirit come upon Wesley, and, like the walls of Jericho, the vice and indifference of the masses of England fall prostrate before him. Let the Spirit come upon Evan Roberts and the Church, and all the forces of evil in Wales are scattered like chaff before the wind. Power—resistless, subduing power—is one of the marks of the Spirit.

Have we got this mark of power? Do we exercise conquering and subduing force? "No man hath been able to stand before you unto this day," I read about the nation of Israel and their career of conquest. Would that be a true description of the Church? Does she pursue her conquering way unchecked? Are all hostile forces powerless against her? On the contrary the Church, in some respects, seems to falter and fail. She makes no inroads upon the territories of evil. The world, indeed, seems to gain upon the Church. I look out upon the Christian Church to-day, and she gives to me the impression of exhaustion. There are wrinkles on her brow, there are lines of care and anxiety upon her face, there is a look of weariness in her eyes. Her work seems too much for her. She does not

possess equipment sufficient for her task. After the defeat of Colenso, General Buller wrote to General White, shut up in Ladysmith, to tell him frankly that he was not strong enough to force his way through the opposing forces and relieve him. All he could do was to sit down where he was and seek to defend Natal. And General Buller, after Colenso, typifies the Church of Jesus Christ to-day. We feel the forces opposed to us are too strong for us. We are surrendering the policy of attack. We are satisfied, for the most part, if we hold our own. Our weakness and sense of failure have driven us to the work of examination. We have been overhauling our machinery. We have been adapting our methods. But I question whether we have got right down to the root of the mischief. It isn't simply a question of antiquated machinery, it is a question of power. It is not a matter of mechanics, but of dynamics. The question I would put to the spent, and wearied, and exhausted Church of these days of ours is this: "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed"—for, no matter what our machinery, if the Spirit were ours power would be ours too.

I do not, for one moment, impugn or even challenge the genuineness of the Christianity of our day. These twelve men at Ephesus were genuine disciples, although they had not received the Holy Ghost. But they were disciples who did not know the ease, and freedom, and rapture of the Christian life. They were imperfect, impoverished Christians. They were Christians who lived in the sweltering

valleys instead of upon the bracing uplands. They were Christians who dwelt in the darksome cellar instead of the sunny upper room. And that is very much our plight. There are various stages of Christian life and experience. There are some who dwell on the earthly life of Jesus, and who accept Him as Lord and Master, and toilsomely seek to follow Him. There are others who advance a stage higher, and who know something of the power of His death and Resurrection, and the consequent release and emancipation He brings. But there is a third and higher stage still, when men know Jesus, not simply as an Example, not even simply as a Sacrifice, but as a Power through His Spirit dwelling in us. It is in one or other of the two former stages we, for the most part, sojourn. It is this latter stage that brings fulness of power and joy. Our Christian life is empty, and poverty-stricken, and toilsome! There is no freedom, or ease, or fulness about it! We live at a poor dying rate. And the reason for it is that we "have not received the Holy Ghost." We have not opened our hearts to the incoming of the Divine Comforter with all His wealth of inspiration and power.

And the fault is all our own. We cry and beg for the Spirit, as if God begrudged bestowing Him. We are not straitened in God, we are only straitened in ourselves. We have not the Spirit, not because God refuses to give, but because we do not open our hearts to receive. Hence our weakness and weariness. We are seeking to live the Christian life and accomplish the Christian task without the power.

We are living the pre-Pentecostal life in Pentecostal times. I have read somewhere of a farmer who, by hard and strenuous, and even slavish labour, only succeeded in getting out of his land a bare existence. But his son one day discovered that this poor farm was rich in gold. They had been living on the starvation line for years when all the while almost boundless wealth was theirs. And that is our plight. We go on struggling and striving, when the Holy Ghost would make life a bounding joy for us. We toil in rowing, when the breath of the Spirit would sweep us along in ease and comfort.

This is our bottom need—to *receive the Holy Ghost.* "They that wait upon the Lord," says the prophet, "shall renew their strength"; or, as the phrase may be translated, "They that wait upon the Lord shall change their strength." Instead of their own poor strength (which, after all, is but weakness) they shall have the inexhaustible and resistless strength of God—so that "they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." And that is exactly what we want—we want to *change our strength.* We want to exchange our own efforts, puny and baffled as they are, for the omnipotent energy of God. And all that omnipotent energy becomes ours when the Spirit dwells within us. There will be no talk of weariness or failure then. Power will be in all our actions, peace will be in our hearts, joy will be written on our faces. We shall go forth conquering and to conquer, and nothing shall be impossible to

us. Have you received the Holy Ghost? Are you willing to receive Him? He is to be had for the asking. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

BROOKS BY THE WAY

He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.—PSALM CX. 7.

HERE the Psalmist spoke "larger than he knew," and a Psalm, written primarily, perhaps, of David, finds its true fulfilment in great David's greater Son. He alone answers to the description of the conquering king who is also a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. It is He alone who goes forth at the head of an army numberless as the dewdrops of a summer's morn, every soldier in it clothed in holy garments, sweeping His enemies before Him, gaining one victory after another until they are all beneath His feet, and His Kingdom stretches from the river unto the ends of the earth. Now, it is just to one touch in the Psalmist's picture of this conquering king and priest that I want to call attention. "He shall drink of the brook by the way: therefore shall he lift up the head." The poet follows this warrior priest, this priestly king, to the war; he sees him winning victory after victory, until the earth seems filled with the slaughtered bodies of his foes. But he grows weary and tired in the conflict; his tongue cleaves to his mouth for thirst; his sword well-nigh drops from his hand for sheer weariness as he toils on beneath the fierce glare of

the Eastern sun. And it seems as if he must faint and fall before the full fruits of victory are reaped, when suddenly a little brook of cool and limpid water presents itself to his gaze, and the faint and tired warrior stoops and drinks a long, deep draught, and the clear, cool water brings refreshing and new strength to his exhausted frame, so that, with new vigour and determination, he resumes the pursuit, and makes the victory final and complete. "He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head."

And what I want to do is to speak briefly of one of the "brooks in the way" of which our Lord drank in the midst of His sore conflict and travail, and of which we too, in our lesser conflicts, may drink to the refreshing and renewal of our souls—the *brook of human sympathy*. Our Lord hungered for human sympathy. I think, sometimes, that we forget that our Lord was truly man. We forget that He was touched with the feeling of all our infirmities. And the consequence is, we find it hard to realise that our Lord ever really needed sympathy or could be helped by it. And yet, if one thing is obvious as we read the story of His life, this is obvious—He hungered and thirsted for sympathy. How deep and strong that hunger was, you can, I think, discover if you will read carefully what happened in the Garden. When Jesus went forth to that great conflict He took His eleven disciples with Him. Of course, He had to tread the winepress alone, and yet He wanted these eleven men near Him. "Sit ye here," He

said, "while I go yonder and pray." And the three of them who were nearest to His heart He invited to a still more sacred intimacy. "He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled." There was comfort to Jesus in His agony in the thought that He had friends nigh at hand and within call. And it was an added bitterness in His bitter cup when, after His appeal to them, "Abide ye here and watch with Me," on His return, He found them sleeping. "What," He said to Peter, and all His wistful and pathetic longing for human sympathy finds expression in the question, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?"

Our Lord, I say, thirsted for human sympathy. The gospel story makes it quite clear He did not receive very much of it. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He was "the despised and rejected of men." His own brethren did not believe in Him. And yet Jesus was not altogether without experience of human sympathy. He tasted occasionally of this "brook by the way," and, when He tasted of it, it brought refreshing to His soul, and it made Him lift up the head. He received some measure of sympathy from the twelve. I read this in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel—it occurs at the close of that marvellous discourse about eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man—"Upon this many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Jesus said therefore unto the twelve:

Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And the fidelity of the disciples that day, their sympathy with Him, however imperfect and oftentimes blundering as it may have been, was a "brook in the way" for the weary Christ. It refreshed and strengthened His soul, and He never forgot it. "Ye are they," He said on the very eve of the passion, "ye are they which continued with Me in My temptations." He received greater sympathy still from the women from Galilee, who followed Him and ministered to Him of their substance, and most of all, perhaps, from Mary of Bethany. I call to mind that great feast which Martha and Mary made for Jesus because He had raised Lazarus from the dead. When He came to the feast that day our Lord was cast down and sore troubled. For the end of the way was drawing near, and the shadow of the Cross lay cold and heavy across His soul. But during the feast Mary took an alabaster box and broke it and poured its costly contents over the Master's head and feet. "She hath wrought a good work on Me," He said. And the good work that Mary wrought that day was that she strengthened our Lord to bear the Cross. Yes, she heartened and encouraged Him in His great resolve to taste death for every man. For that broken alabaster box stood for love—deep, strong, adoring love. And our Lord marched to the Cross with bolder step and braver heart for the love Mary lavished upon Him at the feast. He

drank of the "brook in the way," and so lifted up His Head.

And this is a "brook in the way" of which Christ's followers have often drunk to the refreshing of their souls, of which indeed weary and stricken souls still drink to their refreshing and great comfort. There is a mysterious power in sympathy, and I thank God that the stream of sympathy is ever "in the way" of sorrowing souls. I see much sorrow, much pain, much heartbreak, but I see also, and I thank God for it, much sympathy. Indeed, I am persuaded we never know what a wealth of sympathy and love there dwells in many a heart until sorrow calls it forth. And how a little sympathy comforts, and cheers, and refreshes the soul. "She *did* help me," said a poor soul about one who was a veritable angel of mercy. "I felt so much better for her visit." "Well, what did she say to you?" I asked. "Well, she didn't say much, but she sat with me and held my hand." That good woman's sympathy, silent sympathy, was a veritable "brook in the way" to that poor bereaved and lonely soul, and she drank of it and lifted up her head. And when I realise what sympathy does, what healing and comforting power there is in it, I am tempted to plead with you for a fuller exercise of this grace. "Weep with them that weep," says Holy Writ. There are broken hearts and bleeding spirits all around us. There are people with crushing sorrows and bitter griefs all about us! Do you try to comfort them? Do you try to cheer them? Do

you try to bind up the broken heart? "A man shall be," says the prophet—*i.e.*, every man—"as rivers of water in a dry place." Are we sources of refreshment and help to weary and stricken folk? Let your compassions flow forth, let your pity have full play, let your sympathies lavish themselves on the sick, and the sad, and the lonely; they will prove to be a brook in the way to weary and fainting souls, and as they drink they will again lift up the head.

THE TWELVE-HOUR DAY

Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him.

JOHN xi. 9, 10.

"ARE there not twelve hours in the day?" This was our Lord's answer to His disciples, when they protested against His suggestion that they should return into Judæa again. You remember the circumstances. The concluding paragraphs of the preceding chapter tell us how the unbelief of the Jews developed and hardened into bitter and violent hate. In the course of a conversation with them Jesus had been led to make the tremendous assertion that He and the Father were one. To the Jews, with their strict monotheistic faith, the claim was sheer blasphemy, and they took up stones to stone Him on the spot. They did not, however, put their murderous purpose into execution, but they left Jesus with the settled determination in their hearts that, in some way or other, they would take Him. Under those circumstances Jerusalem was, obviously, no place for Jesus, and so, to escape a premature death, He left the city and took refuge in the country beyond Jordan, where John at first baptized. In the seclusion of that district He was safe from the malice and hate

of His foes. But even "beyond Jordan" He was not safe from the appeals of His friends. One day there came an urgent message to Him from the sisters at Bethany—"Behold he whom Thou lovest is sick." At the moment He seemed to pay no heed to it, but two days later, in the early dawn of the day, He startled His disciples by proposing that they should retrace their steps. "Let us go into Judæa again," He said. The proposal literally staggered the twelve. Bethany was in the danger zone. To go back there was to court death. "Rabbi," they protested, "the Jews were but now seeking to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" To which our Lord made reply: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" As much as to say: "I fear no risks that may come to Me in the discharge of My duty. I have My appointed task, and My appointed time wherein to fulfil it. I know that My twelve hours of work are not yet over. Till My appointed hour has come the Jews are powerless to hurt Me. They cannot hurry the sunset. Are there not twelve hours in the day?"

Now, behind this answer of our Lord's I seem to get glimpses of certain views of life which He held; and it is to these views of life which Jesus held, and which in His own career He exemplified, that I want to call your attention. Let me take the words in their primary and most obvious reference. "Goest Thou thither again?" said the panic-stricken disciples. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" was our Lord's calm and serene reply. What a suggestion of leisureliness and peace that

answer gives. Jesus felt, perhaps as no one else ever felt, the pressure and urgency of life. But with all the urgency and pressure our Lord was never hurried. When life becomes urgent and importunate with us we are apt to become hot and fussy and excited and flustered. But Jesus moved with calm and unhurried step, with quiet and unruffled spirit, through all the crowding cares of His life. He never became hot or fussy. He never—shall I use the term?—"bustled." There was a fine leisureliness about all His actions; an unbroken serenity characterised His life. And this was the secret of it. *He knew He had His twelve hours.*

Notice, for instance, how He declined to allow His friends to hurry Him into hasty action. His mother—it was very motherlike—was all eagerness to have her Son's greatness revealed to men and recognised by them. So at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee she tried, shall I say, to quicken the pace. "When the wine failed the mother of Jesus saith unto Him: They have no wine. And Jesus saith unto her: Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." His brothers tried to do the same thing at a little later stage in His career. When a certain Feast of Tabernacles drew near, His brethren said unto Him: "Depart hence, and go into Judæa that Thy disciples also may behold Thy works which Thou doest. If Thou doest these things, manifest Thyself unto the world." To which suggestion Jesus replied: "My time is not yet come. I go

not up yet unto this feast, because My time is not yet fulfilled." Our Lord refused to allow even His nearest and His best to hurry Him into a premature discovery. He walked leisurely on His God-appointed and self-chosen way. And the reason for His calm leisureliness, as compared with the haste and excitement of Mary and His brothers, was just this. *He knew He had His twelve hours.*

And that serenity and fine leisure, which were proof against the persuasion of His friends, were proof also against the threatening of His foes. Notice, for instance, His calm, His absolute calm, in face of Herod's plottings. When certain Pharisees brought Him word of Herod's designs, and said to Him: "Get thee out and go hence, for Herod would fain kill thee," Jesus made reply: "Go and say to that fox, behold I cast out devils and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected. Howbeit, I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Our Lord refused to allow Herod's hate to hasten or hurry Him. He altered His plans not a single jot. He went on His chosen way undisturbed, unafraid. Herod was powerless to hurt Him. *He knew He had His twelve hours.*

It is the same majestic calm and serenity we see here. The mere mention of Judæa flung the disciples into a panic. A return to Bethany seemed to them to mean a premature death. "No!" said Jesus! "There are twelve hours in my day. It is not in the power of the Jews to make My sun

set a moment before its time. My times are in God's hands. While He has work for Me to do He will provide Me with time wherein to do it. Therefore, let us obey the call and go into Judæa again." And, in this consciousness that there were twelve hours in the day, that there was time for every duty God expected of Him, that He was immortal till His work was done, you have the secret of our Lord's majestic leisure and unruffled calm.

GOD—A CONSUMING FIRE

For our God is a consuming fire.—HEB. xii. 29.

WHILE I think this phrase emphasises primarily the stern and austere aspect of the character of God as the vindicator of righteousness and the avenger of evil, there are also suggestions of infinite grace in it. Indeed, Bishop Westcott treats the sentence, in his Commentary, as if it were first, and last, and altogether, a message of grace. In ignoring the plain warning of the words the Bishop is wrong; but in maintaining that the beneficence, as well as the severity, of God is in this sentence, he is perfectly right. Indeed, I will maintain that, at bottom, the goodness and severity of God are one and the same thing. They are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin. John Watson heads one of his chapters in his book on the Doctrines of Grace—"The Mercy of Future Punishment." We are sometimes tempted to think that punishment is practically a denial of mercy, and so we say little in these days about it, under the mistaken notion that it takes away from God's kindness. It is a vast and utter mistake. God would not be more merciful, He would be less merciful, if He did not punish. He would not be

more loving, He would be less loving, if He never lifted His rod to smite.

> Thy chastisements are love, more deep
> They stamp the seal divine.

Looking at punishment from one point of view we see revealed in it the wrath of God; looking at from another point of view the *wrath* transfigures itself into *love*. Looking from one point of view we see in punishment the *severity* of God; looking from another we see the *severity* transform itself into *goodness*. Our God is a consuming fire! What is it? A sentence full of the terror of the Lord. Looked at from another point of view, what is it? A sentence full of the grace and mercy of God.

For consider the figure for a moment. "Fire" is much more than the agent of destruction. We say fire is a bad master—but it is a good servant. Fire, indeed, is one of the most beneficent powers at the command of man. And, in interpreting a figure like this, we have no right to confine ourselves to one aspect of it. Both aspects must be taken into account. If there is something in God corresponding to fire on its destructive side, so there is also something corresponding to it on its beneficent side. Is this sentence a message of fear to the sinner? It is a veritable gospel to the saint. For fire is much more than a destroyer, It is, to begin with, *the great purifier*. And that is what "our God is a consuming fire" means—it means that He will come into our lives like *purifying and cleansing flame*.

God acts upon human character very much as the fire does upon the ore. He is as a refiner's fire and as fuller's sope. When He finds us we are a mass of impurities. There is, perhaps, more dross than gold in our composition. Perhaps a human eye could detect nothing but the impurities, and might cast us as rubbish to the void. That is what they did to the publicans and sinners long ago. But God sees the glitter of the gold through the dross. He saw the glitter of it in Zacchæus, in Matthew, in Mary. He sees the glitter of it in you and me. And He takes us in hand to refine and purify us. How shall I describe the results of God's refining work? Well, suppose I compare what we are with what we shall be. What shall we say of ourselves to-day? "Vile and full of sin we are." What of the future? "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." What shall we say of ourselves to-day? "Our best righteousness, in His sight, is but as filthy rags." What of the future? "We shall be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless in His sight." There seems an infinite distance between ourselves to-day, all soiled and stained and defiled by sin, and the white-robed throng of the saints in heaven. What lies between? Just the *refining fires of God*. In those fires everything false and unholy and unclean, every trace of sin, every lustful desire, every particle of impurity, will be burned out of us, and we shall come forth as pure gold.

I said this verse was a gospel. Is it not so to the man who hates his sins and longs to be delivered

from them? To a man like Thomas Bilney, let us say, crying out in his despair: "My sins, my sins, who shall take away my sins," what better tidings could be preached than this: "Our God is a consuming fire"? for the message contains the promise of complete deliverance from those sins over which he mourns. Is it not a gospel to us all? For are we not all plagued and tormented by the power of sin? Are we not all constrained sometimes to cry like Paul—"Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The promise of our deliverance is in this verse, which speaks of God as a consuming fire, for it tells of a time when sin shall be clean burnt out of us and the soul be entirely emancipated and purified.

And all this is not fiction, but blessed fact. God came into Zacchæus's soul, and He burned the greed out of it. He came into John Bunyan's soul, and He burned the profanity out of it. He came into Colonel Gardiner's soul, and burned all the lust out of it. He came into Billy Bray's soul, and burned all the drink-thirst and sensual passion out of it. God does this when He is introduced into the heart. His holiness burns against any sin or wickedness lurking there until it utterly consumes it. The love of the Holy God and the love of sin cannot exist together. The one inevitably burns out the other. And so I say that for those of us who find the struggle difficult and for whom the fight goes hard, there is a whole gospel in this verse. Here is the promise of the purging away of all the dross and dirt that cling to us;

here is the promise of purity and cleanness—"Our God is a consuming fire."

The "burning out" of evil desire and passion may be a very painful process. I do not deny it. For suffering, trial, distress, loss, bereavement, are amongst God's cleansing fires. But what purifications are the result! I remember one man speaking to me of a great sorrow that had overtaken him in the loss of a little son. And, after telling of his grief, he added: "It whipped the beast and the cur out of me." The fire had done its purifying work. And this is an aspect of God's work this sentence of mine sets forth. It is not a threat simply. It is a gracious promise also. There is the prospect of a purified character in this assertion: "Our God is a consuming fire."

The Latin fathers, who emphasise the gracious aspect of this text remind us that fire not only *purifies*, but it *illumines* as well. Every flame means a certain amount of light. And God, as a fire, they say, suggests illumination and guidance. But I pass that by with the bare mention, in order to refer to one other benignant ministry of fire. Fire not only purifies, it *fertilizes*. It fertilizes in this way—by destroying evil, noxious things it gives beautiful and worthy things a chance to grow and flourish. Supposing you have a garden overrun with briars, and thorns, and weeds. If you want that garden to do anything in the way of fruit and flowers, what is the first step to be taken? All the thorns, and briars, and weeds have to be torn up and destroyed. I remember often-times

seeing, when I was a lad in Wales, a whole mountain-side ablaze—furze, and heather, and bracken all burning together in one fierce conflagration. Sometimes we could see the flames: sometimes it was the lurid glare in the sky that told us the work of destruction was going on somewhere. And in the morning the mountain would reveal itself all black and burnt, scorched and bare. Mere destruction one might be tempted to say, and indeed, as a lad, I never saw one of those fires without a certain fear. And yet the farmer, in every case, had started the fire deliberately. He knew well what he was about. When the spring came back that black, charred mountain side was all covered with luxuriant green. The fire had only destroyed what was worthless to the farmer, and had made a way for better and more useful growths to spring up. And it is exactly so with us. Our hearts are overrun with briars and thorns in the shape of our passions and sins; and these passions and sins of ours prevent the upspringing of those seeds of goodness that lie buried in every human heart. You remember what our Lord Himself said: "The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word." That is it; these noxious growths make it impossible for useful and worthy growths to live. And so God comes as the consuming fire to burn up and destroy these briars and thorns of the heart; our sins and impurities shrivel and perish in His fierce flame; but the result of it all is a sweet and fragrant crop of the flowers of the

virtues and the fruits of the Spirit. He burned out Peter's cowardice that courage might flourish, and John's intolerance that love might grow, and Paul's pharisaic pride that peace might spring up. I repeat, this is not a threat. It is a promise. Fire is a great fertilizer, and there is promise of a rich spiritual springtime in this word: "Our God is a consuming fire."

DE CORONA

Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible.—1 Cor. ix. 25.

The whole imagery of this verse is suggested to the apostle by the contests of the Isthmian games. Those games very likely the apostle himself had witnessed during his sojourn in Corinth. He had noticed the tremendous exertions of the competitors in the actual running of the race. Very likely, during the weeks and months that preceded the race, he had watched them train. He knew all about the constant severe exercise they had to undergo. He knew all about the weeks of abstinence they had to submit to. And what was there at the end of it all? What was the reward they looked for—for their abstinence and rigid discipline and the panting exertions of the race? A crown —a crown of parsley, or olive, or hay; a crown which, in the course of a few weeks, withered and decayed; a "corruptible crown."

Now the Christian life, Paul says, is a race, and a hard race too. If discipline and constant self-restraint are necessary to enable the athlete to win his race—discipline and rigorous self-restraint are necessary to enable a man to run successfully the Christian race. How hard the Christian race was Paul himself knew by experience, for to him it had

meant hunger and cold and nakedness, and stonings, and scourgings, and distresses, and persecutions. But the prize at the end more than compensated for the hardships of the race. If, says Paul, it is worth while for the athlete to sweat and struggle and strain himself for that fading wreath, it is infinitely better worth while for the Christian cheerfully to face all the hardships of his race for the crown that will be his reward at the end; for that crown is an *incorruptible crown.* Paul himself never forgot that this lay at the end of all his striving. "I press on," he said, "toward the goal" —in spite of trials, and difficulties, and obstacles.— "I press on"—through all trouble, distresses and persecutions—"toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It was worth while to suffer any and every hardship, it was worth while to suffer the loss of all things, it was worth while to be treated as the very filth and offscouring of the world—for the "incorruptible crown" which lay at the end.

The objection is often raised that we ought not to think of rewards at all in the Christian life. Christianity, we are told, ought to be disinterested; the man who makes much of the rewards of the Christian life really turns the Christian faith into a kind of glorified selfishness. Now, all that would be true if men were Christians for reward and not for love. Our Lord himself, you remember, repudiated that kind of discipleship, when He roundly charged the people with following Him, not because they saw signs, but because they ate

of the loaves and were filled. A man who follows for the sake of reward—if such a man could be found—would not be a Christian in the true sense at all. But really this danger of an interested and selfish Christianity is quite an imaginary one, for, in our religion, the object of love and the reward of our discipleship are one and the same. Christ is the object of our love. Christ is the end of our striving. That is why we run the race—because the love of Christ constrains us; that is the prize we hope to win at the end of the race—to gain Christ and be found in Him.

This talk about *the selfishness of the expectation of reward* savours very much of cant. I know it is an objection often urged against our religion—but I repeat, it is an objection that savours of cant. What, at bottom, does the doctrine of reward in the Christian religion amount to? It simply amounts to this: *an assertion of the reasonableness of Christianity.* No man would deliberately enter upon a life that he knew was bound to end in loss and disaster. A man has not only the right, but surely he is under obligation to make the very best of his life. To justify any course of life a man must satisfy himself that it means profit and gain of good at the end. For the sake of the good at the end a man may be quite ready to run risks and suffer hardship. For instance, he may be willing to submit to the rigours of Klondike, or face the fevers of Johannesburg, for the sake of wealth at the end. In the train the other day, I heard a young fellow say he was just about to

start for the West Coast of Africa. Now the West Coast, as you know, has been called the White Man's Grave. But this young fellow was willing to run the risk of three years' life in that deadly climate—"for," said he, "I shall come back with my fortune made." Explorer after explorer has gone forth to try to discover the secret of the North Pole. They have braved all the perils and discomforts of the Arctic winter, and they have thought the advancement of scientific knowledge, and the fame and glory they themselves would win, sufficient reward. It was only the hope of the gain at the end that made these undertakings and adventures rational. For a man to submit to hardship and pain, and risk his life with nothing at the end, with no hope of gain or good, is not disinterestedness, it is pure folly, it is madness, it is suicide. I am not at the moment discussing whether the rewards most men seek are worthy or not, I simply point out the fact that it is the good and gain at the end of their striving, even if the good and gain be nothing more than the winning of a livelihood, that make the lives of men rational and intelligible.

Now, what makes the Christian life reasonable is just this, that it *is great gain.* It is perfectly true it demands sacrifice and self-denial, but the sacrifice and self-denial are not ends in themselves, they are means to an end; they are to issue in a larger and richer life. If there were no richer and fuller life to be gained, Christianity would stand condemned as an irrational religion. Even as it is, there is a con-

flict between the Greek ideal of self-development and the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice. The advocates of "culture" are ready enough to say that Christianity means self-mutilation and impoverishment. It is always a case of "Thy sons, O Sion" against "Thy sons, O Greece!" And I freely admit that, if the Christian doctrine of self-denial were for denial's sake merely, the Greek ideal would be the one to commend itself to reasonable men. We cling to our Christian faith because, in it, sacrifice is not an end but a means. It stands, not for impoverishment, but enrichment. The end of the sacrifice is a more abundant life. "There is no man," said Jesus, "who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life." What do you make of that promise of the hundredfold? Do you regard it as a mere vulgar bribe? It is nothing of the sort. It is our Lord's emphatic assertion of *the reasonableness of the Christian life.* Christ's service justifies itself by its results. It is, indeed, the one and only reasonable life. For a life of self-pleasing and sin is not a reasonable life. It won't bear thinking about, for it ends in impoverishment, loss, and disaster. "He that saveth his life shall lose it." But the Christian life justifies itself on the grounds of reason, and prudence, and common sense. Godliness has the promise of the world which now is and of that which is to come. And of this reasonableness of the

Christian life the doctrine of rewards and punishments is simply the expression.

Now, in my text the Christian reward is set forth under the figure of a *crown*. What kind of a crown is it the Christian is to receive? I am persuaded that we have interpreted the figure too literally, and perhaps it is because of the materialistic way in which we have interpreted it that critics of Christianity have been so ready to object to its doctrine of rewards. When we have read of the "crown" we have thought of the crown of gold that adorns or burdens a monarch's head, and it is something of that kind we have looked for as a reward of our running the Christian race. But, as a matter of fact, the "crown" held out to us is a nobler crown by far. It is an incorruptible crown:

> It shall new lustre boast,
> When victors' wreaths and monarchs' gems
> Shall blend in common dust.

It is described in three ways: (1) Paul describes it as a "crown of righteousness"; (2) James describes it as a "crown of life"; and (3) Peter describes is as a "crown of glory."

In other words, the "crown" which the Christian wins is a sanctified character, an abundant life, the "well-done" of God. And that is an "incorruptible" crown. The things he labours for form part and parcel of himself. Time and death cannot strip him of them. The holy character, the eternal life which Christ bestows—these never fade or perish.

But to win that incorruptible crown—

Thou too must tread, as He trod, a way
Thorny and cruel and cold and grey.
Rebels within thee, and foes without,
Will snatch at thy crown.
But march on, glorious; martyr, yet monarch, till angels shout,
As thou sit'st at the feet of God, victorious, 'Conqueror and king.'

THE APPEARANCE ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS

Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.—LUKE xxiv. 26.

THIS exquisite story of the appearance of the Risen Lord to the two disciples as they journeyed to Emmaus is preserved for us by St. Luke only, and is, as Godet says, one of the most admirable pieces in his gospel. Apparently, in chronological order, this appearance is to be placed second on the list, for these two disciples seem to have set out on their journey *after* the discovery by the women and Peter and John that Christ's tomb was empty, but *before* Mary had come back with her story that she had seen the Risen Lord alive. The two first appearances—the appearance to Mary and this appearance to the two disciples—have, as Bishop Westcott says, remarkable features of likeness and difference. They are similar, for instance, in this respect: both the revelations were given to humble and insignificant persons. The first was given to a woman whom Christ had rescued from degradation and shame, out of whom He had cast seven devils. The second was given to two disciples of the rank and file. Cleopas and his companion were not apostles. They were not

even prominent in the circle of the disciples. We know nothing about them save what is recorded here. Even at the time when Luke penned this account the name of one of them had been forgotten. The two men appear just for a moment in this incident, and then they sink back and are lost in the history of the Church. This is the one event in their lives. They have been immortalised by this Sunday evening walk. Both appearances, therefore, illustrate our Lord's regard for the lowly. It was not to any of the wise, or mighty, or noble after the flesh that the Risen Christ revealed Himself first, but to the weak and foolish and despised things of the world. He showed Himself, not to the wise and prudent, but unto babes; not to the chiefest of the apostles, but to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils, and to the humble Cleopas and his unknown friend.

And another point of similarity is this: both appearances were vouchsafed to persons keenly conscious of loss. Mary could not drag herself away from the tomb in which the body of the Lord had been laid on the Friday; these two disciples could think and speak of nothing else save of the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. For, to Mary and these two men, the world had been made a blank by the death of Jesus. Mary stood by the tomb weeping. These two men, as they walked, looked sad. In each case there were breaking hearts to be comforted, longing souls to be satisfied. And that was why the Lord appeared first to them. It illustrates

what Faber calls "the blessedness of longing." Need always commands the presence of the Lord. Desire for Him always issues in discovery. Those who miss Christ most find Him first. "To this man will I look"—so runs the old promise—"even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word."

But if there are points of similarity between the appearances, so are there also points of difference. Mary and these two disciples were alike in their consciousness of need. They were all three of them distressed and troubled souls. But the trouble, in the case of Mary, did not take quite the same form and had not quite the same root, as in the case of the men. How shall I express it? Mary's trouble was emotional; the trouble of Cleopas and his friend was intellectual. Mary's grief was the grief of a loving soul for the loss of the best of friends; the grief of these two disciples was grief over the shattering of an ideal and the collapse of a mighty hope. It was the empty grave that troubled Mary; it was the Cross that troubled the two disciples. Mary was broken in heart; these two disciples were perplexed, confused, harassed in mind. And the difference in the need accounts for the difference in the appearance. The old legend says that the manna in the wilderness tasted to every man what he loved the most. Even in physical and temporal matters, the old legend would have us believe, God fitted the supply to the desire and the need. Well, however it may have been in the matter of the

manna, that is exactly how God works in the moral and spiritual sphere. He fits the gift to the want, the blessing to the need. To Mary, broken-hearted for the loss of her Lord, He spoke the one word, "Mary," which made her realise He was alive; to these two disciples, puzzled and perplexed by the Cross, He opened the Scriptures and showed from Moses and the prophets that it "behoved the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory." In the one case He ministered to the needs of a loving woman, in the other to those of reasoning men. In the one case He comforted the heart, in the other He enlightened the mind. The first revelation—if I may borrow Bishop Westcott's titles—was a revelation through *love;* the second was a revelation through *thought.*

What must it have been to hear the Bible expounded by Christ, explained by Him who was at once the Subject and the Inspirer of the Book! It is no wonder the hearts of these two men burned within them as He talked! Such marvellous speech they had never listened to in all their days as the speech that whiled away the miles between Jerusalem and Emmaus.

And the subject of Christ's Bible-lesson was this—the necessity of Messiah's sufferings. He preached to them the truth of redemption through sacrifice, glory through suffering, exaltation through shame. The Cross was not a mistake, a tragic blunder, a catastrophe. It did not mean the loss of the Crown. On the contrary, it was the direct way to Messiah's throne. "It behoved the

Christ to suffer these things and enter into His Glory."

"It behoved the Christ to suffer." And when Christ said the Cross was necessary, He did not mean simply that it was "necessary" in order to fulfil the predictions of psalmists and prophets. He meant that it was eternally and essentially necessary. He meant that without the Cross He could not have been Messiah at all. He meant that without such a complete and utter sacrifice there could have been no redemption.

"It behoved the Christ to suffer"—for in no easier or cheaper way could redemption be won. Sin was an awful and terrible thing. It was a breach of the moral order of the universe. It was an offence against God's holy law. It was not to be lightly dealt with. It was not to be forgiven with a word, or crossed out by a stroke of the pen. God had to vindicate the moral law—otherwise there would have been anarchy and chaos. And He did it by sending His Son to die. In Christ's Cross, sin is branded for the deadly thing it really is; and in the same Cross, God's holy law is vindicated and honoured. Because Christ died God can be just, and yet be the justifier of them that believe. But it behoved the Christ to suffer. Not otherwise could redemption have been won.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin.
He only could unlock the gate
Of Heaven, and let us in.

"It behoved the Christ to suffer"—for in no

other way could He have brought home to men's minds and hearts the uttermost love of God. It is the sacrificial love of the Cross that melts, subdues and conquers men. It is by it men's hearts are won. The disciples tried to dissuade Christ from the Cross. Had they succeeded, they would have robbed Him of His empire. There was no other way to the throne. No Cross, no Crown. If Christ was to reign from the river to the ends of the earth, it "behoved Him to suffer."

And all this He showed these prejudiced disciples was in their Bible. The Old Book was full of a suffering Saviour. I see Bibles sometimes with a gilt cross stamped upon their covers. Jesus proceeded to show these disciples of His, that, if they had eyes to see, they might discern the Cross, not on the covers of their Bible, but upon every page of its contents. "Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

And as He talked their hearts began to burn. The chill gloom of fear and doubt began to disappear, and faith began to blossom into life again. Before they reached Emmaus, they had been converted to the belief that Jesus, although He had died upon the Cross, nay, *because* He had died upon the Cross, was the divinely appointed Saviour of the world.

SCEPTICISM AND STAGNATION

And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and I will punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.—ZEPH. i. 12.

THESE words of the prophet Zephaniah refer to men who had been prominent in the reforming movements of the early part of King Josiah's reign, but who, because the reforms had not answered their expectations, had become soured and cynical and listless. They said the work was not worth while. They said God evidently did not care. "The Lord," they said, "will not do good, neither will He do evil." The figure the prophet uses to describe them is taken from wine. Wine which was not after a certain stage strained off, but which was allowed to "settle on its lees," grew thick and syrupy, and lost all its sparkle and freshness. Hence, "to thicken on one's lees" became, as Dr. George Adam Smith says, "a proverb for sloth, indifference and the muddy mind." These one-time reformers had become like wine which had thickened on its lees. They had lost the sparkle and freshness and zest of their early years. Delay and disappointment had bred cynicism and sloth.

The cynicism and despair of these one-time

enthusiastic Jewish reformers is by no means an isolated phenomenon. Disappointment has again and again in the world's history issued in faithlessness. When men fail to realise their great dreams they are apt to lose all zest and zeal and to thicken on their lees. Browning, in his poem on "The Lost Leader," speaks of one who "broke from the van and the freemen," and who sank "to the rear, and the slaves"—attracted by the bribes offered to him to desert the great cause:

> Just for a handful of silver he left us,
> Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
> Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
> Lost all the others she lets us devote!

But if one here and there is bribed into the surrender of some great ideal, many more are lost to the great causes because they lose heart and faith. There is scarcely a great cause whose history does not furnish us with examples of men who thickened on their lees, who grew weary in the fight, and who abandoned the struggle long before the victory was won. For great causes do not advance to their triumph in a day or a year. They advance to their final victory through years of conflict and delay and seeming defeat. And the delays and the disappointments and the defeats are too much for the faith of many. "The love of the many," as our Lord foretold, has, in case after case, "grown cold."

Dr. George Adam Smith quotes Mazzini as bearing witness that this thing happened in the course

of the struggle for the emancipation of Italy. Fired by Mazzini's eloquent and burning speech, thousands and tens of thousands of Italians enrolled themselves in the party that was known as "Young Italy," all of them pledged to redeem their land from the tyranny of the Austrian and Papal oppressors. In 1848 they attempted a revolution. After meeting with some brief and transitory successes, reverses came, and in 1850 their tyrants were back again on their thrones. And the result of the disappointment was that multitudes thickened on their lees. They gave up the dream of a free Italy. They lost heart. They lost faith. They said it was not worth while to struggle any more, and so gave themselves up to a life of ease and sloth and self-indulgence.

Is the danger simply an ancient one? Is it not a danger of our own day? Disappointment is still the fruitful mother of sloth and cynicism and despair. The mills of the gods grind so slowly they scarcely seem to grind at all, and men lose heart and faith. There is not a great cause that has not its tale to tell of men who lagged and faltered and failed, who surrendered their ideals, and abandoned their quests, and thickened on their lees. And the cause of Christ most of all. What disappointments and delays have attended the coming of Christ's Kingdom! Centuries have passed, and here we are with two-thirds of the map coloured black, and countries like England, that have enjoyed the gospel for generations,

Christian only in name! The slowness of it all has shattered the faith of some! "If only God would do something," said Froude to Carlyle; to which Carlyle replied, with tragedy in his very tone: "He does nothing." That is it! He does nothing! It has seemed to many as if God did not care—as if He neither did good nor evil. And so they have despaired of the Kingdom. What is the use of it all? they say. It avails nothing, it profits nothing, and so they thicken on their lees, abandon their ideals, relinquish the struggle, and sink into indifference and sloth. Christ foresaw all this, and therefore He laid immense stress and insistence upon "enduring" to the end. "No man," He said, "having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." Therefore also the apostle bade us "consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls."

Are you ever tempted to thicken on your lees? To lose heart? To give up the struggle? The remedy for faint-heartedness is to remember God. They that wait upon the Lord will never fall out of the ranks, they will run without being weary, they will walk and not faint. They know that a thousand years is with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years. They have the instinct that can tell that God is on the field when He is most invisible. And so they never sink back to the rear and the slaves; to the last breath they are in the van and amongst the free-

men, for they know, despite all delays and disappointments and defeats, that

> Right is right, since God is God,
> And right the day must win;
> To doubt would be disloyalty,
> To falter would be sin.

"He that believeth shall not make haste."

And as this peril of "thickening on the lees" is never absent from the history of great movements, so it is never absent from certain ages of life. I believe this is the *peculiar and special peril of middle age.* All of us start with great enthusiasms and high ambitions. We dream splendid dreams of what we are going to be and do. But the conquest of the world is a harder thing than we thought. The ideals we cherished prove hard of realisation. And so often by the time middle age has come we turn faithless and cynical, and can even laugh at the rosy dreams we cherished in our youth. We give up our visions, we abandon our great quests, we "thicken on our lees," and are content with mere physical comfort. Do you remember the story of the part Sir Gawain played in the Quest for the Holy Grail? Like the other knights of King Arthur's court, he set out in search of the Holy Thing—which is really only a symbolical way of saying that Sir Gawain, too, started with the ideal, of a great and holy and Christlike life. But he soon wearied of the quest, and, finding a silk pavilion in the field and merry maidens in it, he abandoned the quest, and spent his twelve months and a day in sensuous ease and pleasure. And, on

his return to King Arthur's court, he scoffs at the very idea of the quest. "It is a madness," he says,

> "But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear
> I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
> And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
> To holy Virgins in their ecstasies henceforward."

Gawain is just a picture of the man who has "thickened on his lees," who has surrendered his early ideals and hopes and betaken himself to a materialistic and sensual life. It is a peril to which we are all exposed. As the years pass we are apt to think that money, and comfort, and pleasure are the only things worth having, and, like Sir Gawain, we scoff at the "holy ecstasies" of our own youth. We think this cynicism is a mark of worldly wisdom and experience of life. But I will tell you what it really is, it is the death of the soul! The Christian never "thickens on his lees"; he never surrenders his ideals. "Your old men shall dream dreams." To the very end he is aspiring, pressing forwards, striving upwards; to the last, life for him is full of eagerness and zest, and hope. It is with him a case of

> Forward all the life time
> Climb from height to height,
> Till the head be hoary,
> Till the eve be light.

THE WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET

He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet.
JOHN xiii. 10.

THE gospel history presents us with no more moving, pathetic, and subduing picture than this of our Lord and Master washing His disciples' feet. "He took upon Him the form of a servant," says Paul, in a great and well-known passage in the Philippians. And the best commentary upon that statement is this paragraph from John's Gospel, in which he tells how, on the night on which He was betrayed, Jesus took a towel and girded Himself, and performed a slave's office and stooped to wash the feet of John and Thomas, and even of Judas. But to appreciate all the pathos and the power of the story we must ponder well the verses with which the Evangelist introduces it. Our Lord's public ministry was over. Indeed, in four-and-twenty hours, life itself would be over for Him. His last controversy with thwarting scribes and Pharisees was finished; His last sermon was preached; His last miracle was performed. And Jesus knew it all. He knew that His hour was come. And just exactly as a man leaving home for a prolonged absence—a missionary, let us say, returning to his field of labour, or a trader to his far-off station—after settling all his public business, likes to

reserve his last few hours for his nearest and best friend—so Jesus Christ, when the shadows of His departure were gathering about Him, wished to spend the last few hours, not with the crowd, but with "His own," the few faithful souls who loved Him and clung to Him.

And these concluding chapters of John's Gospel, beginning with chapter xiii., give us the account of the conversation which, under the very shadow of the Cross, Jesus held with His own. And, recalling those never-to-be-forgotten hours, the thing that stands out in the Evangelist's memory is the wonderful tenderness and love which Christ displayed. "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Our English translation scarcely does justice to the original. The marginal rendering of the Revised Version reproduces much more accurately the sense of the Greek—"He loved them to the uttermost." Jesus had always loved these disciples of His. If He had not loved them He would never have borne patiently with them as He did. But there was a peculiar and yearning tenderness in the love of Christ that night. The tides of love surged up in their very fullest that night. There was no more that love could do than Jesus did that night. "He loved them to the uttermost." And all that follows, including the feet-washing, is but an illustration of this "uttermost love."

"Uttermost love," says John. Yes, for notice

how *self-forgetful* it was. It was the very eve of the Lord's Passion. In a few hours He would be in the hands of His foes, and then would come the slow agony of the spitting and the buffeting, and the scourging and the Cross. Already the bitter cup was at Christ's lips. Already His soul was being troubled. Now sorrow is proverbially self-absorbed. A man with a heavy grief of his own is too occupied with his own trouble to think of others. But there never was a sorrow like Jesus Christ's sorrow. There never was a grief like His. When a friend is in trouble we try to comfort him with our sympathy. It was Jesus who bore the trouble in this case. But it is not the disciples who cheer and comfort Him—it is He who cheers and comforts them. "Let not your hearts be troubled," He says to them; and, as you read, you might think He had no trouble of His own. I am not surprised John speaks of "uttermost love." It was "uttermost love" which made Christ forget His own sorrow and spend the last few hours of His life trying to cheer and comfort His disciples.

And now, turning from the consideration of the conversation of the last hours in general to the consideration of this incident of the feet-washing in particular, it brings to us further illustration of this "uttermost" character of the love of Christ. You must, as I said before, study the story in the light of the brief preface with which John introduces it. That forms, so to speak, the background against which the Evangelist paints his picture.

"Uttermost love," says John. Yes, for it is a *stooping* love. John will not let us make any mistake as to who it was that performed this menial work at the supper. "Jesus," he says, "knowing that His Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper . . . and He took a towel and girded Himself." Look at the contrast between the person who rendered the service, and the service rendered! That was the service rendered—the washing of the feet of a dozen Galileans. A slave's task! And that was the Person who rendered it—Jesus who made the world and who sustained the world; Jesus who came from God, and who thought it not a prize to be on an equality with God; Jesus who was going back again to God, to be welcomed by all the angelic hosts shouting: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." That was the Person who stooped to this lowly task! It would have been no great condescension for any of these Galileans to have poured water over the feet of the rest. But it was "uttermost love" that made Jesus stoop to this! And that is the character of the love of Christ, it is a *stooping* love; it stooped to become incarnate, and, having taken flesh, it stooped to the humblest and lowliest service.

From the heights of highest glory
To the depths of deepest woe,
All to ransom guilty captives:
Flow, my praise, for ever flow.

"Uttermost love," says John. Yes, for once again, it was love in face of a perfect and absolute knowledge. Notice how the knowledge of Christ is emphasised in these verses. Jesus *knew* His time was come. Jesus *knew* that the Father had given all things into His hands. Jesus *knew* him that should betray Him. Jesus *knew!* They say that love is blind. I do not believe it. I believe love is vision, and knowledge, and sight. But however it may be about our love, the love of Jesus was not blind. Jesus *knew* what was in man. Jesus not simply knew His own glorious dignity, He knew all about the weakness of some of the men whose feet He washed. He knew that, in a few brief hours, they would all forsake Him and leave Him to His fate—and yet He washed their feet. He knew Peter, in the Judgment Hall, would deny with oaths and curses any knowledge of Him—and yet He washed Peter's feet. He knew that Judas was about to go out to do his traitor's work, and that soon he would bring that mob with swords and staves to seize Him—and yet He washed Judas's feet! Come, look at this thing which the very angels desire to look into. Jesus washing the denier's and the traitor's feet! Here is "uttermost love." Love can go no further than this—to lavish itself upon the men who deny and betray Him.

All this "uttermost love" came out in the washing of the disciples' feet. They had gathered, you remember, in that Upper Room for their last supper, and, *during* the supper (not after supper),

Jesus, laying aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. "*During* supper." But the usual time for feet-washing was not *during* supper, but before it. When guests arrived at their host's house that was the first grateful service rendered to them; a slave unloosed their sandals and poured the cooling and refreshing water over the feet that had become heated and soiled with the fine and scorching dust of the road. It was one of the charges our Lord brought against the Pharisee with whom He dined, that he had neglected this common and primary courtesy. "Thou gavest me no water for My feet." Why, then, did Jesus do this service *during* supper? The reason lies on the surface: *because somebody had neglected to do it before.* It had been the custom, probably, for the disciples to do this humble service for one another in turn. But, on this particular evening, not one of them would stoop to do it.

On the way they had been arguing and quarrelling about order of precedence! And so, when they streamed into the room, none of them would condescend to perform this humble office of feet-washing. Was Peter, who had been so angry with John for asking the throne next to His Lord, now going to stoop down and wash John's feet? Never! And was John going to play the servant to Judas, or such humble folk as Simon the Canaanean and Thaddeus? The thought was intolerable. And so, like sulky schoolboys, as Dr. Marcus Dods says, they sat at the table looking at the ceiling, arranging their dress, but each resolved

upon this—that he would not be the man to own himself servant of all.

An ordinary man would have despaired of these dull and slow disciples. But Jesus loved them to the uttermost. He loved them well enough to be infinitely patient; well enough to go over the old lesson again and again, line upon line, precept upon precept. And so, on this particular evening, when He saw their hearts full of anger and hate, instead of lowliness and love, in order to teach them the old lesson that in the Kingdom the humblest is the highest, and the servant of all is the greatest of all, Jesus Himself condescended to perform the lowly service that His disciples were too proud and stubborn to render. "He riseth from the table and laid aside the garments, and He took a towel and girded Himself. Then He poureth water into the bason and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." And oh, how those disciples' hearts burned with shame as they watched Him! Can you not imagine the tense and painful silence that fell upon the little company? Can you not imagine them watching His every action? Can you not imagine the sudden pang of self-reproach as they saw what it meant? Can you not imagine how ugly and hateful, and utterly loathsome, their own pride must have appeared to them, as they watched their Lord go from one to another with the bason and the towel? Why, if you will believe me, there was not a disciple amongst them who was not humbled to the dust. There was not a

disciple amongst them who was not ready to bite off his tongue for very shame—as Cranmer was ready to burn the hand that had signed the recantation. When Jesus took His garments and sat down again at the table it was a group of abased and humbled disciples He had about Him—each ready, with shame, to take the lowest place.

THE WORKING GOD

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.—JOHN v. 17.

GOD is not an inert and inactive Deity. He is a *working* God. He is everywhere present. He is ceaselessly active. He worketh "in all and through all." The old Greeks pictured their Deities as living in a distant Olympus, quaffing their nectar, pursuing their own pleasures, but aloof from and unconcerned about the affairs of men. The Deists of the eighteenth century thought of God as a kind of absentee landlord. He had made the world; He had set it going—as a watchmaker might set a watch going—and then left it to itself. That is, maybe, how we sometimes are tempted to think of God still—remote, aloof, unwatchful, unconcerned. But that is not the Bible view of God! The God of the Bible is an *active God*, a *resident God*. "High, and lifted up, and inhabiting eternity," no doubt; but also counting the hairs of the head of the humblest of men, and watching the sparrow when it falls. The immanent God! Yes, let me use the term. I know it has its dangers. I know how easy it is, in emphasising God's immanence, to forget His transcendence. I know how easy it is to identify God *with* the life of the world when insisting upon

His presence in it. Still, let me use the word. God is above the world, but He is also *in* it. He is the Immanent, as well as the Transcendent God. He is not simply a watcher: He is an actor. He is not simply a spectator: He is a participant in the game. *An* actor? *A* participant, did I say? He is *the* actor: He is the principal agent. He is the decisive factor—"*My Father* worketh even until now."

It would do us good to realise this simple fact that God is a working God; that the forces we can feel and see are not the only forces at work in this world of ours; that there is another mighty, though invisible, worker in the field. "My Father worketh." We are apt to allow the tangible and visible powers of the world to engross our attention. We do so in national affairs. I take up the newspapers; I find no recognition in them of a working God. In their computations of possibilities, it is the material forces which nations are able to command that they reckon. God does not seem to count. If they believe in Him at all, they do not believe in Him as a factor in the affairs of nations. Armies, guns, warships, these are the things that count—not God! In these materialistic days it is well we should lay hold of this truth, that God is a *working*, a *practical*, an *active* God. All history teaches it! I was in Paris recently, and the Paris I saw seemed to reek of the great Napoleon. Now, Napoleon was perhaps the supremest military genius, as well as the mightiest man of modern times. But what Napoleon was continually leaving

out of his calculations was—God. When he started his campaign in Russia, for instance, he took everything into account save God. He had not reckoned that the frost and the snow would come that winter a little earlier than usual. It was not the Russians that reduced his grand army to a wreck —but the elements. "God Almighty has been too much for me." If genius, ambition, material resources, could have built up an Empire, Napoleon would have done it. But when I gazed at Napoleon's tomb and remembered that the mighty emperor who once made and unmade kings by his very nod, ended his days a broken man, confined to a dismal island in the Atlantic, I remembered also this word of our Lord's, how He said, "My Father worketh even until now." *Even until now!* It will save us from unworthy panic, it will save us from the tragic folly of building our hopes upon "reeking tube and iron shard;" it will inspire us to put our trust in simple righteousness, if we remember that soldiers, and sailors, and statesmen are not the only people on the field—"My Father worketh even until now."

And what is true on the national scale is true also on the *individual* scale. We can see that certain evil things are at work in our midst. The devil is unceasingly busy. All the seven deadly sins are at work. Adam the First and his three daughters waylay every traveller. Wanton and Madam Bubble make their assault on all our youth. Demas tries to beguile every man of business to turn aside with him at the silver mine. About

the activity of the forces of evil there can be no mistake. Evidences of their deadly handiwork are all about us. We are surrounded by broken, ruined, shamed men and women. But the devil is not the only being at work. God is also at work—and therein lies the world's hope. "My Father worketh"—if I did not believe that I should utterly and wholly despair. I confess that, if I thought I lived in a Godless universe I should be pessimistic to the core. For none but an Almighty God can save men from the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the vainglory of life. If there be no God, then evil is triumphant, irresistible, supreme. Your human devices of education, and culture, and art, are about as likely to resist the onset of passion as a child's sand-castle is to check the sweep of the tide. But God is a refuge and strength. God can deliver and keep. God can make men stand in the evil day. And God is on the field. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work."

"My Father worketh *even until now*." He is busy still at His saving and redeeming labour. There is not a person who reads these lines who has not had some experience of this gracious work of God. We are what we are because of it. By the sacred influences of the home, by the voice of conscience, by the means of grace, and by the potent pleading of the Cross of Christ—the Father worketh. There is something subduing and amazing in this anxious, constant, untiring work of God! One of the old Puritans said that the way to heaven is hedged

with crosses. But, while it is hard to win one's way to heaven, I sometimes feel it is harder still to make one's bed in hell. God has hedged up the downward way with all sorts of gracious hindrances and restraints. A man has got to get past the memories of his home, the sacred examples of his parents, the pleadings of his own conscience, the appeals and warnings of the Bible, and the mighty love of the Cross, before he can make his bed in hell. God has beset us behind and before, and laid His hands upon us. In a thousand subtle ways His Spirit touches us and pleads with us—"My Father worketh even until now, and I work." And the great object of this mighty, costly, ceaseless "Work" of God is our redemption.

And now, just a word about the *method* of God's working. No! *Method* is the wrong word! What I want to speak about is one quality of God's working which is suggested by the very phrase itself. "My Father worketh even until now." "Even until now!" The patience of God's working! God takes no holiday! God has no Sabbath from this gracious and blessed work! His healing and redeeming ministry never ceases! He is perennially trying to restore the impotent man to health and strength! It is trying and disappointing work often enough. God's efforts again and again are thwarted, His hopes defeated, His gracious purposes foiled. Think, for instance, of His "work" to save and redeem Israel. It is set forth in that matchless story of the Wicked Husbandmen, to whom the Master of the vineyard sent servant after

servant, to bring them back to their duty and allegiance. And some they beat, and some they stoned, and some they handled shamefully, and some they killed. And still God sent other servants, and, at last, His Son. That is the picture of the unwearying work of God. He never tires. "My Father worketh *even until now.*"

Disappointment in *our* case often leads to abandonment. When we fail—especially when we fail repeatedly—we give up. But God never gives up! The longsuffering of God is our salvation! There is a story told of Sir Isaac Newton that, when he had finished his "Principia," he left the manuscript lying about in his room. And the maid-servant the next morning, thinking the bundle of manuscript was but waste paper, used it to light the fire. The great scientist simply had to begin over again from the beginning. And that is what God is constantly doing. He is continually beginning over again. That, indeed, is how the Scriptures describe God's work. They compare Him to the potter. And that is what the potter does. When, for some reason or other, the clay in his hands does not shape itself aright, he simply makes it over again. It is slow work, disappointing work, trying to build a man up into the likeness of Christ! It was slow work, for example, with Peter. Again and again, all God's labour seemed to have been wasted and His work thrown away. But, after every breakdown, after, even, what looked like the hopeless ruin of the denial, God just began over again, and did not

cease His work until He had converted the timid and impulsive Simon into the stedfast and faithful Peter. And that is characteristic of our gracious God. He never tires. He never abandons any man as a hopeless case. With infinite patience He resumes and continues His work. And that again is our hope! "The long suffering of the Lord is salvation." Our hope of standing complete at last lies in the unwearied patience of God. The Lord fainteth not neither is weary. "My Father worketh *even until now*."

THE PREROGATIVE OF POWER

The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted, where the birds make their nests.
PSALM civ. 16, 17.

"WHERE the birds make their nests"—that was the special point about the cedars of Lebanon which attracted this Psalmist's notice, the little birds made their nests in them. This psalm is a Creation Psalm—one of the grandest lyrics in the whole of the Bible. "It is a bright and living picture," says Bishop Perowne, "of God's creative power, pouring life and gladness throughout the universe." In this Psalm the singer singles out some of the great glories of nature, and argues from them to the greatness and glory of God. And, amongst the glories of nature, he reckons the cedar, that mighty and beautiful tree that clothed the slopes of Lebanon in a vesture of dark and glossy green; and the chief glory of the cedar, he declares, is this—it provides home and shelter for the birds of the air; "where the birds make their nests."

It is in no way surprising that the Psalmist should have selected the cedar as one of the glories of nature. The Bible has a great deal in it about the cedar. To the Jew it was the king of trees; "the tree of the Lord," as it is called here.

He counted the cedar of Lebanon as one of the great beauties of his land. But what is surprising and unexpected, is the precise point about the cedar which this Psalmist selects for our admiration. Most men speaking of the cedar would have mentioned its size; it was a mighty tree, with thick and massive trunk, soaring up to a height of more than a hundred feet. And then they would have gone on to speak of its beauty. It was a graceful and symmetrical tree, and with its carpet of dark green was welcome to the eye. And then they would have gone on to speak of its strength. It was to the Jew what the oak is to us. It furnished masts for his ships, and pillars and beams for his house, and so hard and tough was it, that rot could not touch it and insect borers could not assail it, with the result that it stood in its place firm and unshaken for hundreds of years. And then they would have gone on to speak of the high uses to which it was put. It was of cedar wood that the palaces of the kings were built; it was cedar that was mainly employed for the erection of the Holy Temple itself. And finally, perhaps they would have spoken of its endurance and tell how the Lebanon cedar braved the winds and storms of innumerable years, and outlived generation after generation of men. But it is to none of these characteristics of the cedar the Psalmist calls our attention; it is for none of these things he claims our admiration. He finds the glory of the cedar, not in its glossy foliage, not in its massive strength, not in its unnumbered years, but in this—that its branches give shelter and pro-

vide a home for the birds of the air. "The cedars of Lebanon . . . where the birds make their nests."

It was not that this Psalmist could not appreciate the other points about the cedar which appealed to the average man. This Psalmist had the poet's soul (this Psalm abundantly proves it), and I am quite sure he had as keen an eye as anyone for the shapeliness of its form and the glossy green of its foliage. I am sure that he had a vivid sense of the majesty of its strength. I am sure he yielded to no one in reverence for its hoary age. But one thing about the cedar impressed him more than its beauty or its strength or its antiquity, and that was, shall I say, its helpfulness. And so it came to pass that the Psalmist, when gazing at the towering cedar, fixed his eye upon a fragile little nest, half hidden by the foliage, the home of short-lived birds, and finds in the presence of the little nest, the cedar's chief glory. To his eye the beauty of the cedar was enhanced and rendered infinitely more beautiful by its usefulness and helpfulness—"handsome is that handsome does." To his eye, the strength of the cedar became the more grand and glorious because it was used to protect and shelter weakness. That is what the Psalmist saw in the cedar—the great making a home for the little; the strong giving protection to the weak; a thing of immemorial age providing shelter for the creatures of a day. And so, when he sings the praises of the cedars, he does it in this strain. "The trees of the Lord are satisfied,

the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted, *where the birds make their nests.*"

Now I want to point out to you that this Psalmist had grasped a great New Testament truth, viz., that *power becomes beautiful when it protects,* that strength becomes admirable when it stoops to shelter weakness. Let me call your attention to this truth for a moment or two—the very spirit of the New Testament is in it. We live in days when immense store is set upon power. You can see this in national affairs. Every European nation is engaged in a feverish struggle for power. The multiplication of Dreadnoughts, the invention of new weapons of destruction simply means this, —that, at the present, the nations worship power, material strength, brute force. And what you see illustrated in the region of practical life in the policies of nations has been, in these later days, erected into a philosophy. Nietzsche's philosophy resolves itself virtually into the apotheosis of force. The superman, for whom he claims our admiration, is simply the incarnation of power, and at the feet of this superman we are invited to fall down and worship.

But we need to learn (and perhaps there is no lesson that needs more continual emphasis in these days) that there is nothing admirable about mere strength. Mere strength may be brutal, ruthless, devilish. There is nothing admirable about *national strength*—if that strength is used to oppress and bully weaker peoples. There is nothing admirable about fleets and armies if the only use a country

makes of them is to shake a "mailed fist" in the face of a half-civilised nation, or to snatch territory from a weaker neighbour. And there is nothing admirable in *individual personal strength* in itself. Some of the strong men—the supermen of the world—have been the world's greatest curses. Napoleon was a "strong man"—a man of commanding intellect and of indomitable force of will—but Napoleon used his strength to advance his own personal ambitions, and he drenched Europe with blood. Leopold of Belgium was, in his way, a "strong man," but it was a strength bent only on personal aggrandizement, and he has left a bloody mark upon history in that ravaged, wasted and depopulated Congo basin.

No! strength, in itself, is not beautiful or admirable, and there is nothing we more urgently need to be delivered from than the insensate worship of power, characteristic of our own days Strength is beautiful *only when it shelters the weak*, power is admirable *only when it is used to protect.* Let me illustrate what I mean. Look at this mighty Alp, with its bare, scarred, rugged sides. There you can see a sheer precipice, and yonder a yawning chasm, while it lifts its frowning bulk, height upon height, until its summit is crowned with everlasting snow. I have stood before such a mighty hill before to-day, and, as I gazed at it, grey, stern, massive, immovable, I have been filled, overwhelmed almost, by the impression of power. But it has been a grim, stern, terrifying kind of power, filling the heart with a chilly sense of awe and dread. But come

with me and I will show you at the base of that mighty Alp, nestling in its arms, as it were, sheltered in its bosom—a little village. It shields it from many a storm and tempest. The winds may whistle and blow and mean destruction, but they cannot shake the houses down there in the village—the mountain comes between them and it. The storm may be raging wildly and fiercely, but there is quiet in the little village, for the mountain bears the brunt of it. The mountain is a protection, a barrier, a safeguard, a refuge and defence to the village that nestles at its base. And, as I look at the grim old hill from the standpoint of the village, it begins to present a different aspect to me. It loses its sternness and becomes beautiful. It ceases to terrify and becomes gracious and genial, and kindly. Bare strength is ugly and repellent, but strength is beautiful when it is used to shelter the weak, and power is gracious when it is employed to protect.

And that is when personal and individual power becomes beautiful too, when it is used to shelter and save, to uplift and bless. We have, each of us, our modicum of power. To each one of us God has given talents and faculties, to some less, to others more ; no man is without his peculiar gift, and with the gift there comes opportunity and responsibility. Now the lesson we need to learn is this—it is when our gifts and talents are used to protect and succour and shelter others that they become radiant and beautiful.

And that is why God has given us our gifts and

powers (whatever they may be)—that we may use them to help and bless others. "The property of power," says Pascal in one of his deep and pregnant sentences "is to protect"; that is its function; that is its business; that is the purpose for which it was given. "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest," says the the great Evangelical prophet. It is rather a different figure from that of the Psalmist's, but the idea is exactly the same. Every man is to be a rock, in the lee of which his weaker brother may shelter. He is to come between men and the storms of temptation that beat down upon them. He is to be to his fellows what the cedar is to the birds. The property of power is to protect. Are we using the power God has given to us in this way? Have you the gift of sympathy? Use it to comfort the sorrowful. Have you the gift of a strong faith? Use it for the strengthening of the wavering and the doubtful. Have you the gift of a firm and stable will? Use it to succour the weak and easily tempted. We are in the world to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves.

THE SUFFERING AND PERFECTION OF CHRIST

For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.—HEBREWS ii. 10.

THE sufferings of Christ were a great difficulty to the early Hebrew Christians. They had been brought up in the expectation of a triumphant, not a suffering, Messiah. In the Jewish conception of Messiah there was absolutely no room for a Cross. For to the Jews, as Dr. Peake says in his commentary, "the Divine was the splendid and the mighty, not the sordid life of labour and the infamy of the Cross." The result was that, wherever the Gospel was preached, the Cross was, to the Jews, a stumbling block. It was an offence to them. It was almost an insuperable hindrance in the way of faith. The Jews would have found it far easier to accept Christ had there been no mention of rejection, and shame, and death in the story of his life. Even the Resurrection triumph did not remove for them the difficulty of the Cross. If the Jews had had the arranging of Messiah's life, they would have had it pass straight, let us say, from the Hosannas of the triumphal entry to the glory of the Ascension, and would

have obliterated entirely the tragic story of Gethsemane, the Judgment Hall, and Calvary's Hill.

It is in view of this difficulty to faith that the Apostle Paul devotes so much space in his Epistles to the discussion of the Cross. He bends all the powers of his consecrated genius to the task of proving to his readers that the Cross at which they stumble, far from being a mistake, is the wisdom of God and the power of God. It is in view of that difficulty that the unknown writer of this Epistle takes upon himself to write to his Hebrew fellow Christians. The main object of the letter is to "justify" (if I may use the term) the sufferings of Christ, to prove that they do not detract, but rather add to His dignity and glory. At the text prefixed to this reading the writer has reached a stage in his argument. The whole of this chapter, you may say, is a glowing prophecy of the great destiny in store for man. And that destiny is set forth in type and example in the glory which is Christ's already. All things are to be made subject to man, and that high destiny is already realised in that Jesus whom we now see "crowned with glory and honour." And that glory, which is already Christ's possession, is due to His sufferings. It is because of the suffering of death that He is crowned with glory and honour. That does not mean, as Dr. Dale seems to suggest, that the glory and honour were given to Christ as a reward for His sufferings—a kind of compensation for all He endured while he was here upon the earth. The writer means that the glory and honour were, in

some way, the result and fruit of the sufferings. That was the only way in which Christ could be fitted for His mighty task. God had to make the "leader of our salvation" perfect through sufferings.

"Made perfect"—that is a startling phrase. It looks, at first sight, as if the implication was, that, until these sufferings had done their work upon Him, Jesus was *imperfect.* But that cannot be the writer's meaning. There is no suggestion here that Christ was ever faulty or morally imperfect. In seeking to understand the exact meaning of a phrase like this, there are at least two things that we must bear in mind.

(1) First of all this, *perfection is not inconsistent with progress.* Perfection is not static, but dynamic. The mistake we make is that of thinking that *perfection* is a fixed, definite, completed thing. That may be so of inanimate objects, but not of living beings. That idea may hold good of a painting or a statue, but not of a man. As a matter of fact you can see for yourself that *perfection* is one thing at one stage in a man's life and quite another and a different thing at another. "When I was a child," says the apostle, "I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child." And nobody would have had him do otherwise. What makes the beauty of childhood is this: that the *child is really childlike.* "But," the apostle goes on to say, "when I became a man I put away childish things." In other words, the qualities that make manhood perfect are not the same qualities as those which make childhood beautiful. What is charming and

delightful at the one age, becomes incongruous at the other. We revolt, alike at the idea of an *old* child, or a *childish* man. All of which means, of course, that *perfection* is progressive. A child may be perfect as a child, and yet he must grow in strength and knowledge to be perfect as a man. Now, all this is true when applied to Jesus Christ. There was progress in His life. He grew in grace and favour with God and man. He advanced in knowledge. But this does not mean that He was ever *imperfect.* He was perfect *at each successive stage.* He was perfect as a child, perfect as a youth, perfect as a man. As life and duty made ever enlarging demands upon Him, He answered to them. He always did the things that pleased God. And so it came about that our Lord was growing all His life, and yet, at every point in His development He was the *perfect man.*

Take the one point of *obedience* for illustration. There is a phrase a little later on in this Epistle to this effect: "He *learned* obedience by the things which He suffered." He *learned* obedience! It looks at first sight as if there had been a time when our Lord was something less than obedient. But that is not what the writer really means. Jesus was *always* obedient. He always perfectly fulfilled the duty of the moment. When He went down to Nazareth and was subject unto His parents—He was obedient; that was the duty God wished Him to discharge just then. When He toiled as a working joiner in His father's shop—He was obedient; that was the duty God wished Him to discharge

just then. But, as the years passed, new visions of what *obedience* meant broke upon our Lord's soul; He realised God meant Him to be a preacher of good tidings to the people; He realised that He was to redeem them from their sins. And by-and-by in the Wilderness, in the Garden, on the Cross, He began to understand what obedience cost. He learned *obedience,* what it really meant, by the things He suffered. Our Lord was never *disobedient.* He was perfectly obedient at every stage of His life. He was about His Father's business when in the carpenter's shop. But there was a range and a depth involved in obedience of which He was not aware in those early and innocent days. He found out what obedience meant when He hung on the Cross; He learned obedience by the things He suffered.

And what is true of our Lord's obedience is true of His *total perfection.* He was at every moment *perfect,* and yet he was at the same time acquiring perfection. As Dr. Peake says: "As each day brought with it new experiences, He turned them into opportunities for deepening and widening His moral education, always rising to meet the demand as it arose." And the sufferings our Lord endured were things which contributed to the enlargement and enrichment of His perfection. And so it comes about that, though Christ was never less than perfect at any stage in His life, the sacred writer can speak of God making Him perfect through sufferings.

(2) The second thing to remember in seeking to

arrive at the exact meaning of this phrase is this: that the particular perfection the sacred writer is here thinking of is Christ's perfection as *leader* or *captain* of men's salvation. That was God's object, to make "the captain of their salvation" perfect. The perfection referred to is perfection in leadership. It may be that under other conditions the discipline of suffering would have been unnecessary. To be a perfect king of angels, for instance, there would have been no need for Christ to suffer. To be the joy and bliss of unfallen spirits there would have been no need for Christ to suffer. To be the light and life of a sinless heaven there would have been no need for Christ to suffer. But to be a perfect leader for broken, stricken, sinful men, Christ had to suffer. To be able to emancipate them from their bondage and to lead them out of the prison-house, Christ had to suffer. To be an adequate Saviour and Redeemer, Christ had to suffer. The suffering was more than flesh and blood could bear. Our Lord cried out against it. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." But only by drinking the cup and enduring the suffering could Christ become the Author of a better Exodus of enslaved and imprisoned souls. The suffering was meant to fit Him for leadership. It was as the Leader of men's salvation that Christ was made perfect through sufferings.

MORNING AND EVENING

Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice.—PSALM lxv. 8.

THERE is a double strain in the Psalm from which the text is quoted. Blending with the song of praise for a bounteous harvest, there sounds through the Psalm a song of praise for national deliverance. It is to the section of the Psalm which celebrates the political deliverance that the text belongs. And if it is to be interpreted in close connection with the paragraph of which it forms part, then it must mean that by the marvellous deliverance which He had wrought for Judah God had filled the whole land, from the place of the sunrise to the place of the sunset—as we should say in England, "from John o' Groats to Land's End"—with songs of thanksgiving and joy. But there is no need so to limit the reference. The remembrance of God's goodness to Judah flashes into the Psalmist's soul the truth that God is always good, that from the outgoings of the morning to the outgoings of the evening, from first to last, from beginning to end, His tender mercies are over all His works.

But it is not about the constant and unfailing goodness of God that I want to speak, though that may be the thought dominant in the Psalmist's mind. It is the emphasis he lays on the morning

and the evening, the dawn and the twilight, the beginning and the end, that attracts my notice. It may be that he meant that God was good and loving all the way through (at any rate, that is the central message of Holy Writ), but what he says is that joy characterises the morning and the evening. And it is in that sense that dear old Matthew Henry interprets the verse. "It is hard to say which is more welcome to us," he declares, "the light of the morning, which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening, which befriend the repose of the night. Does the watchman wait for the morning? So does the hireling earnestly desire the shadow." There is a joy of the morning, says Matthew Henry in effect, and a joy of the evening. A joy attaches to the morning and the evening that does not seem to attach to the rest of the day. And the old Puritan is quite right. There is a joy of the morning; it is the joy of renewed strength and multiplied power. We are fresh and strong in the morning, and we go to our day's task with zest and courage. And there is a joy of the evening. We get weary of the day's toil, and there is no hour so welcome to us as the hour of respite and release. Tired and hard-pressed men and women are glad when the hour of rest arrives. So that, in a very literal sense, of these passing days of ours it is true to say: "He maketh the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice."

But I want to widen the reference, and to

interpret my verse not, as Matthew Henry does, of these passing days of ours, but of *human life*. I believe that, in the deepest and truest sense there is joy all the way through life. There is a joy of the noon and the afternoon, but it seems to me God has conferred a special joy upon the beginning and the ending of life. The best of life is at its start and at its finish. Midway there is a time of stress, and strain, and conflict, and disappointment, and sometimes of defeat, but God makes the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice.

Let me speak for a moment about the *joy of the morning*. There is nothing for conjuring up golden dreams and entrancing visions like a little child's cradle. Every child is a bundle of hopes and possibilities. And every parent hopes the best and believes the best for his child. It was not Mary only who sang a magnificat over her first-born son: every mother sings such a magnificat over every son and daughter born to her. We build the most gorgeous castles in the air, and the little child is the foundation on which we build them. There is an exquisite joy for the parent in the dawn of a child's life. And so there is for the child himself. There are no such days for sheer, unalloyed happiness, as the days of childhood. I know quite well that children have their little vexations and troubles, and that tears easily and quickly come; nevertheless, there is not one of us who has got up into middle life who does not know that there are no days like childhood days. We look back at our own childhood. What a careless,

happy time it was! We began, like those who are children to-day, in the garden of innocence and delight. But, before very long, we, too, ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and, as a result, we found ourselves out in a world of briars and thorns. We have scarcely known what unalloyed happiness—happiness without a taint or a pang—is, since those early days. Our golden age, from that point of view, is behind! Thank God, this time of pure joy and delight comes for us at the beginning. Life is full of zest for the child. He lives in a kind of wonder-world. Every day nature reveals to him some of her secrets. He is always discovering new beauties and marvels. And in those childish years, sin has done nothing to mar the sheer delight of living. And that is why I, for one, rejoice in every effort to safeguard childhood and to prolong its years. That is why I rejoice in Factory Acts and Coal Mine Regulations. To send children of ten years or so down into the mine or into the heated atmosphere of the cotton-mill was a sin against childhood. That is why I sympathise with every effort to raise the school age. The labour and toil of life will begin early enough without trenching on the innocent and beautiful years of childhood. Let the child be a child, with all the joys of a child. Let him remain in the garden as long as he may. It is God's will that the "outgoings of the morning of life should rejoice"—that the dawn should be a happy time.

And even when childhood is left behind, youth

also has its joys. Youth is the time of energy and hope. We all start with splendid aims and generous ambitions. We never dream of defeat. Just as we are told every French soldier carries a possible marshal's baton in his knapsack—so we start our active life with an unbounded optimism and the most daring hopes. When Cobden, early in his public career, was told that a given project was impossible, he remarked: "Then, if that is all, we had better set about it at once." That is the youth's spirit. He is full of the *joie de vivre.* Even the prospect of battle does not daunt him. He starts out with colours all flying and the bands all playing. He is going forth to conquer the world. Yes, it is perfectly true of this life of ours that about its beginning there is a glow and a beauty like the rose-flush of an Alpine dawn. "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning to rejoice."

But life's morning soon passes. The careless days of childhood are exchanged for days of toil, and care, and responsibility. And, alas, the dashing, brilliant hopes of youth are often disappointed. Instead of conquering the world, the young fellow finds himself conquered by it. Instead of being a marshal in the army, he remains a private to the last. Instead of being a leader of men, he finds himself a drudge all his days. He wins neither the fame, nor the fortune, nor the place of which he had so fondly dreamed. The world is a hard place, and it is full of broken-hearted men. Not one of us, not the most favoured of us have got out of life all

that we hoped. But set the more favoured ones aside; there is a vast multitude of men in our midst disillusioned, disappointed, broken in spirit. Life has been to them a very different thing from what they expected. They hoped for glittering prizes and they have drawn—*blanks!* And so the world becomes to them dull, and flat, and stale, and unprofitable! Of course, I know that men are needed to do the drudgery of life, and I know full well that happiness is not denied to the man who does the drudgery. God wants the men to hew on the mountains and to dig in the quarry, and a man may be happy in the faith that God wants him exactly where he is—"content to fill a little space, if God be glorified." I am not forgetting all that. But at present I am simply calling your attention to the fact that life, for multitudes, is hard and disappointing. The cares and anxieties and troubles that come crowding on to men rob life of its zest and joy. So that there are multitudes of men who say of their days that they have no pleasure in them. The morning that broke so brightly has developed with a day of cloud and gloom.

But that is not the end of life's story. "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice." "And the evening!" I believe that, after the happy days of childhood, there come for every one of us days of stress, and strain, and disappointment, and temptation. Sin and sorrow, and anxiety, and defeat bring dark and heavy clouds into our sky. But as our life's

sun gets towards the west, the clouds break, and the sky clears, and at eventide it is light with us. There is a *joy of the evening* as well as a joy of the morning. I think there is something infinitely pathetic about the way in which busy men will talk about "retiring." We all talk about it. It is one of the visions we hold before ourselves to the last. We promise ourselves that after a few more years we will shuffle out of our various tasks and labours, and give ourselves a quiet and restful life's evening. Often enough, however, it fails to come. I remember a doctor who had promised himself such a quiet time. When he was sixty-five he was going to retire from practice and enjoy himself in travel. But he put it off too late; he was stricken by sudden illness, and the only journey he ever took was his journey to his last home. But assuming that we realise the quiet time upon which we have set our hearts—it is not that that constitutes the joy of the evening. For if that were all, the joy would dwindle as the years passed. No, the real joy of the evening is the joy that God alone can give us. It is the joy that comes from the infinite promises of God. It is the joy that comes through knowing that, if the earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It is the joy that comes from the vision of the land of far-stretching distances; it is the joy that comes from knowing that the best is still to be. It is God who makes the outgoings of the

evening to rejoice. And so it comes about that the last days of the Christian are his best days. His noon and afternoon may have been a hard and trying time to him; it may have been a time of disappointment and failure. But he looks forward, and knows that when he is in God's own presence,

> Then shall he taste and feel and know
> All he desired or wished below,
> And every power find sweet employ
> In that eternal world of joy.

It may have been a time of hard, and grinding, and wearing labour; but he looks forward, and he knows that in the Father's home he shall have perfect rest and peace. He knows it has been a time of sin; but he looks forward to the time when he shall stand before God's throne washed white in the blood of the Lamb. And so his evening is not a time of gathering gloom, but of brightening glory. At eventide there is light. God makes the outgoings of the evening to rejoice.

THE GREATNESS OF GOD

And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.—ISAIAH xl. 16.

THIS is a great, and glowing, and splendid passage about the might, and the wisdom, and the holiness of God. It was addressed to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. It was meant to rally their fainting souls and to re-kindle faith. For Babylon had been having its effect upon them. It had been sapping, corroding, disintegrating their faith. Some of them—faced as they were, day by day, by the obtrusive strength and power of Babylon—were in danger of despairing of the possibility of a return. Some of them were on the point of turning apostate. The sack of Jerusalem had shattered their faith in God. Bel and Nebo, the deities of the Babylonians, seemed to them to be mightier and more potent gods than Jehovah. It was in face of that condition of things that the prophet penned this challenging paragraph. It is a majestic proclamation of the glory of God. To those Jews who despaired of freedom because of the might and power of Babylon he preaches a God who measures the waters in the hollow of His hand, who weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, to whom the nations—even the mightiest of them—were as a drop

of a bucket and as the small dust of the balance, and who taketh up the isles as a very little thing. To those Jews who were tempted to discard Jehovah for Bel and Nebo, he proclaims a God who sits upon the circle of the earth, who is Lord of the winds, and the seasons, and the stars, who is active in the world of men, bringing princes to nothing and the judges to vanity. Bel and Nebo were dead things, the product of the goldsmith's art, powerless to help or save. But Jehovah was the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainted not, neither grew weary.

A great God, a majestic God, an exalted and omnipotent God—that was the God the prophet preached to the exiled Jews. That was the gospel he brought to them—the gospel of the greatness of God. For a real gospel it was! What sort of a people you have depends always upon the kind of god they believe in and worship. No people can be great, if they worship a mean deity. "Like priest, like people," the old proverb says. It would be truer still to say "Like god, like people." The character of a people is determined by the character of the divinity they worship. You never get a clean, brave people if they worship lustful and cruel deities. It is not in the least surprising that peoples who numbered Dionysus and Aphrodite amongst their deities, and who did not hesitate to attribute to their gods every deed of darkness and of shame, were rotted to the very core by lust and vice. And, in the same way, you can never get a big-hearted, great-souled

people if they worship a mean and little god. That was the peril in which these exiled Jews stood. They thought meanly of God and, as a consequence, they grew craven-hearted and mean-spirited themselves. To get a great people you must have a great God. To get people to bear up bravely in the face of difficulties, to be hopeful and courageous in the face of depressions and adversities, you must have a mighty God. And that was the gospel the prophet brought to those exiled and well-nigh despairing Jews—the gospel of the majesty and omnipotence of God. Over against Babylon, that cruel and oppressive world-power that held them captive, he sets the everlasting God, to whom Babylon itself is no better than a drop in the bucket or dust in the balance, and who can sweep all Babylon's princes and judges away as stubble before the whirlwind.

The gospel of the greatness of God! That is a gospel we sorely need to hear proclaimed in these days of ours. In these latter days we have not placed the emphasis upon the *greatness* of God. Our Calvinistic forefathers did. The sovereignty of God was the chief article in their iron creed. But we place the emphasis on the grace of God, the gentleness of God, the mercy of God. I utter no single word by way of disparagement of these beautiful and gracious gospels. But the almost exclusive emphasis we lay upon the gentler and shall I say, softer aspects of God's nature, represents the swing of the pendulum. It is in the nature of a revolt against the sternness of the

Calvinistic preaching, and, like every reaction, it tends to run into the opposite extreme. I am glad we have recovered the great and blessèd truths of the mercy, and pitifulness, and infinite grace of God. But I want to preserve also the truth of the *greatness and majesty of God.* There is no message like it for depressed and despondent days. It is a tonic, bracing, invigorating, strengthening gospel. To remember and to *believe in* the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary, is to say "good-bye" to trepidation and fear.

And there is nothing we want more in these days of ours. For, speaking broadly, Christian people just now are a *discouraged* people. They are oppressed and frightened by the power of the forces arrayed against them. Their hands hang down and their knees are feeble; and their fears and timidities in turn cripple their efforts and paralyse their energies. And when I begin to inquire into the reasons of these timidities and fears, I believe they are, in part, due to this—we have not *thought greatly enough of God.* We have limited Him and minimised Him, and made Him altogether like one of ourselves. We have been frightened by the current talk about the uniformity of nature and the inviolability of law until we have come to think of God as a sort of a helpless prisoner rather than as the living and active God, working in all and through all. And we have, ourselves, so emphasised His gentleness and tenderness as to obscure His majesty and power. We have belittled

God; we have made a small deity of Him; and the result has been, our own faith and courage have dwindled and failed. For you cannot have a victorious faith if you have only got a little God. To have a mighty faith you must have a mighty God. And that is what we want to re-kindle confidence and courage in our souls to-day—a recovery of this gospel of the *greatness of God*.

Do you remember that sentence which Dr. Dale wrote in his diary when he was lying so prostrate with weakness, that even Sir Andrew Clark almost despaired of his recovery? Let me remind you of it. "When I became a little stronger," he wrote, "I endeavoured to find rest in remembering that Christ was my brother, but this did not come home to me. I thought of Him as Lord, and then I had peace." And, speaking of that experience in one of his sermons in Carrs Lane some months later, he said: "It was not sympathy I needed so much as the consciousness of being in the strong hands of One who was my Lord and the Lord of all. That steadied me at once and gave me rest of heart, and courage, and strength." And that is what will steady us in these troublous and disturbing times—to remember that God is more than sympathiser and comforter; that He is the mighty Lord, our Lord, and the Lord of all. That is what will steady us and bring us courage and strength—the remembrance, not simply of His gentleness and goodness, but of His *greatness* too. "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the

earth: the strength of the hills is His also." Our difficulties loom so large before our eyes because we have allowed God to appear so little. But our difficulties would cease to stagger us if we only saw the *great God!*—God in all His majesty and power. For we should know then that "greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us."

> Thy very greatness is a rest
> To weaklings as we are.

says one of our hymns. And it says truly. God's greatness is a rest. It brings quietness and peace. It removes all fear and dread. It banishes doubt. It fills our souls with courage and nerves our arms with strength. For the people who have seen the mighty God are not afraid of the enemies that beset them on every side. They have no fear that the cause of Christ and of His Church is going to be overwhelmed with defeat. They have seen the great God and they know that they that trust the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abideth for ever.

FAITH, LOVE AND HOPE

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.—1 THESS. i. 3.

THE salient and emphatic words of this verse are these three—faith, love, hope. That was why the apostle was provoked to continuous and fervent thanksgiving for his Thessalonian converts —he remembered their work of *faith*, and labour of *love*, and patience of *hope*. Faith, love, hope! In another and slightly varied order we come across this glorious and beautiful trinity of virtues in that magnificent hymn on "love" which you will find in the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. "Now abideth," he writes in the closing verse of that splendid lyric, "faith, hope, love, these three."

According to St. Paul these are pre-eminently the three Christian graces. All others are secondary and subsidiary to these. Prophecy is a great gift; knowledge a splendid endowment; the power of speaking with tongues a blessed grace; but prophecy, knowledge, and tongues are nothing compared to faith and hope and love. And the special glory of faith, hope and love lies just here —*they are permanent*. Man acquires, in the course of his lifetime, many things that he can hold only

for a brief season, and then has, perforce, to part with. The majority of men, for instance, set great store by wealth. And yet it is quite obvious that no man is permanently enriched by the possession of broad acres, and much goods, and heaped-up gold. These are things no man succeeds in keeping. Death strips him of them all. And so it comes to pass, as the seer says, that men who flattered themselves that they were rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing, awake to find themselves miserable, and blind, and poor, and naked when tested by the standards of the great eternal world. Man is only permanently enriched by the possession of things *he can keep*. And the things that a man can keep must be things not outside of him, but *within him*. A man's true wealth consisteth not in the *things* which he possesseth. Notice that! A man's true wealth consisteth not in *things;* a man's true wealth consisteth not in what he has, but in what he is; not in external and mechanical things, but in qualities of mind and heart. These are the things that give a man standing in heaven. These are the things that make a man rich toward God. That is why St. Paul magnifies the importance of faith, hope, love—they *abide;* they form a permanent and unfading treasure, they are coin current of the heavenly realm.

And that is why every remembrance of his Thessalonian converts provokes him to gratitude and praise. He sees them possessed of these durable riches, this everlasting treasure, this inheritance,

incorruptible and undefiled. "We give thanks to God always for you all," he writes, "making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope."

Now, how was it Paul knew his Thessalonian converts were possessed of faith, and love, and hope? I will answer that question by asking another. How can a man tell that such and such seeds were sown in the garden? By the fragrant and beautiful flowers that spring up from them. How can a man tell that such and such a field must have had wheat, or barley, or oats sown in it? By the golden crops of the autumn. From the fruit you argue back to the seed. How did Paul know that faith, and love, and hope had a lodging in the hearts of these Thessalonians? By the good fruit they bore; by the effect upon their lives. He saw the *work* of their faith, and the *labour* of their love, and the *patience* of their hope. How did he know they had *faith?* He saw the *work* of faith. How did he know they had love? He saw the *labour* of love. How did he know they had hope? He saw the *patient endurance* of hope.

Now, faith, hope, love—they are still the supreme gifts. Without them we are utterly and abjectly poor. With them we are everlastingly rich. Without them we may possess all things, and yet really have nothing. With them we may have nothing, and yet possess all things. This, then, is a question of vital and critical importance—Have we faith, and hope, and love?

How shall we know? By examining our lives to see whether they show signs of the presence of faith, and hope, and love in our hearts; for wherever faith is—faith works; and wherever love is—love labours; and wherever hope is—hope patiently and stedfastly endures.

THE WORK OF FAITH

Your work of faith.—1 Thess. i. 3.

Your *work* of *faith!* Does not the phrase appeal to you as being noteworthy? Does not the conjunction of *work* and *faith* strike you as remarkable? The relation between *faith* and *work* has been the subject of endless controversy. You find suggestions of it in the New Testament itself. The characteristic Pauline gospel was *salvation by faith* alone. But I turn to another part of the New Testament and I find James writing in this strain: "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him? Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?" Now some, on the strength of these and other equally vehement passages, have assumed that between Paul and James there was a deep and irreconcilable antagonism. But, far from being mutually antagonistic, I believe Paul and James were in deepest agreement. I believe if Paul had heard James saying: "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works, can that faith save him? Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself," he

would have said "Amen" to it all. Paul did not disparage or depreciate "works." All he tried to do was to put them in their proper place. Works, he maintained, could never take the place of faith or become the ground of salvation; that would be to make the Cross of Christ of none effect; but saving faith, wherever it was genuine, would issue in works. Yes, Paul would cordially have agreed with James that faith, apart from works, is barren, and that it is only by works that faith is made perfect.

In fact, all James's contention is in the phrase of my text—"the *work* of faith"! That was the only faith that was genuine; that was the only faith Paul believed in—the *faith that worked*. And that was the secret of his rejoicing over these Thessalonians—the reality of their faith was proved by its results, their faith was made perfect by works. "Your work of faith!" What was their faith? It was a faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and King! It was a faith in His teaching about life! It was a faith in His revelation of a world to come! And this faith of theirs *worked*. How did it work? In this way. They believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour and King, and as a result of their faith they left all and followed Him, they counted all things but loss for Christ, they endured a great conflict of afflictions for His Name's sake. They believed in Christ's teaching about life, and as a result of their faith they turned their backs upon the abominations of heathenism in which they had been bred, and to which they had been accustomed, and began to live holily,

righteously, and unblamably before men. They believed in Resurrection and the Judgment, and, as a result of their belief, they lived, not for time, but for eternity; they laid up treasure, not on the earth, but in heaven; they set their affections, not on things on the earth, but on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The faith of these Thessalonians was no mere lip profession; it was no pretence; it was no make-believe; it was a faith that *worked*—it produced a clean, consecrated, heavenly life.

Now, we say we have *faith*. But what kind of a faith is it? Is it a genuine faith, a real faith? How shall we know? Well, is it a faith that *works?* Does it fashion and regulate our life? A great deal that passes for faith amongst men is the veriest make-believe. Men have the curious and fatal power of keeping their so-called *beliefs* carefully locked up and preventing them from having any influence upon their lives. Men do not always really believe what they *say* they believe. Let me give you an illustration. The Apostles' Creed sums up, in as simple and concise a fashion as I know of, the main points of the Christian faith. Every Sabbath Day thousands of Christians of every denomination repeat that venerable formula. But do you suppose that all who repeat the Apostles' Creed really *believe* in it? Well, go through it article by article. "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Stop there! Do you think all who say that believe in God? Do you think that the multitudes who live as if they had

only themselves to please believe in God? Do you mean to tell me that the men and women who live during the week as if they knew no higher law than the law of self-interest really believe in God? Pass on to the next article. "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead and buried; The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Stop again! Do you think that all who say that really believe in Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead? Do you mean to tell me that the man who can be hard and grasping, and mean and selfish in everyday life, really believes in a judgment to come? Do you mean to tell me that the man who can indulge in unclean imaginations, and foolish speech, and risky pleasures really believes in a great and holy Judge, who shall one day call him to strict account? I need not carry my inquiries further. There are multitudes who repeat the Apostles' Creed who do not really believe in God, who do not really believe in Jesus Christ, the Judge of quick and dead, and who do not really believe in life everlasting. Their belief is a mere lip belief—the veriest sham and pretence of belief. Only that man truly believes whose belief affects and fashions his life. The only faith which is genuine is the faith that works.

The truth I want to grave on your hearts is just this: We do not really believe in Christ and the Christ life—until we believe in them as the miser believes in his gold, as the pleasure-seeker believes in his pleasure; until we believe that Christ and the Christ life are the only objects worth living for; until, like Paul, we count all things but loss if only we may gain Christ and be found in Him. Is our faith a faith of that kind? Does it rule and absolutely control and shape our lives? Is it a faith that *works?* Let us test ourselves and see. We say that we believe in Christ—that we believe in Him as Lord, and Leader, and Guide. We profess, at any rate, to believe that we only live truly as we follow in His steps. Well, this is what I read about our Lord's life: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." Is that our idea of life? Is that the plan on which we conduct our lives? Do we spend ourselves in ministering to others? Do we go about doing good? Is our faith a faith that *works?* And here is another word descriptive of our Lord's life: "My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." Is it our meat and drink to do God's will? Is that the sole end of our being—to glorify God? Is our faith a faith that *works?*

We profess to believe in Christ as the great Teacher; we profess to believe in His words as the full and final revelation of both God and man. But do we really believe in them? Here is one: "Be not

anxious what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink—your Father knoweth." Do we really believe in a loving Father's care? Do we walk through life with quiet hearts? Are we delivered from worry and anxiety? Is our faith a faith that works? Here is another: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break not through nor steal." Do we really believe that the treasure of earth is fading and perishing? Do we really believe it is infinitely better to have treasure in heaven than it is to have treasure upon earth? Are we labouring harder for heavenly treasure than we are for earthly wealth? Is our faith a faith that *works*? Here is yet another: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Do we really believe in the bounty, and liberality, and generosity of God? Do we really believe He is more willing to bless us than we are to bless our children? If so, do we put a perfect trust in Him? And do we ask Him for great things? Is our faith a faith that *works?*

There is a great deal of so-called belief amongst us—but when I consider the lives many of us live, I think I can understand why it was Christ asked that question: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find *faith* on the earth?" For the only genuine faith is the faith

that *works*, the faith that produces as its fruit a devoted, consecrated, Christian life. Yes, with St. James, I say to you: "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he have faith, and have not works? Can that faith save him? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."

THE GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT

And when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not.—ACTS xvi. 7.

I AM struck by the vivid sense Paul had of the *Divine ordering of his life.* Horace Bushnell has a great sermon upon the theme, "Every man's life a plan of God." That was a truth which, to Paul and the early Christians, was much more than an intellectual belief; it was a practical, living faith. And they did not simply believe that God had a general plan for their lives, they believed also that God was in the particular events that occurred to them in the course of their lives. In everything that happened to them they saw the hand of God. You have not to go outside this book of the Acts of the Apostles to see exactly what I mean. Again and again these early believers attribute their action directly to the Holy Ghost. For instance, it was the Spirit of God that directed Philip to Gaza and brought about the meeting between him and the Ethiopian eunuch. It was the Spirit of God that prompted the first missionary enterprise and said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." It was the Holy Ghost that prompted the visit of Paul and Barnabas to

Jerusalem to discuss with the apostles the question of the necessity, or otherwise, of circumcision. It was the Holy Ghost that inspired the decision upon the matter thus submitted to the Church. And now, in this chapter, it is the Holy Ghost that settles even the details of the apostolic journey. They had, I say, a keen and vivid sense of the presence and power of God in their lives. They were wholly and entirely convinced that their lives, down to the smallest details of them, were planned by God.

Now we, in these days, scarcely feel like these early Christians did, and we certainly do not talk as they did. We do not attribute our actions and decisions to the bidding and direction of the Holy Ghost. We take a more atheistic view of life. To a large extent we banish God out of our calculations. Where the apostles and the early Christians talked of the "Holy Ghost," we talk of "circumstances." And yet surely the apostolic view is the right one. If we believe in a living God at all, we *must* believe that He orders our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. To believe anything else is to repudiate Providence, to make history chaotic and the world anarchical! And history is not chaotic, and the world is not anarchical. We can see purpose, plan, order and design in it. This world is not like a rudderless ship upon an uncharted ocean. It moves along an appointed path to a chosen end. The whole progress of human history declares that God is

no inert and impassive Deity, but a living God; He is not an absentee God, living careless and unheeding in some distant Olympus—God is in the midst of us, a present God. There is no room in this world of ours for luck, or chance, or accident. "Nothing walks with aimless feet." The Lord does all these things.

And this is true, not simply on the large and general scale, but also on the scale of the individual life and the particular event. I recognise, of course, a difference between Nature and man. Nature *has* to fulfil God's purposes. It works without fault, or flaw, or disobedience, according to its appointed laws. But man is gifted with the regal power of will. And by the exercise of will, man can oppose God's plan and rebel against His purposes. Even in such a case, I believe, God over-rules, and makes the very rebellion and opposition of men subserve His purposes. But it is not with the rebellious man I am concerned just now, but with the man who honestly and unreservedly accepts God's will for himself. Of such a man, I say, that he can rejoice in the assurance that God is guiding him in the very details and minute particulars of his life. It was this minute and detailed care that our Lord meant to suggest when He said that the very hairs of our head were all numbered. The apostles had this sense of the Divine ordering. They saw God's hand in the very details of their life. And it did at least two things for them.

(1) It gave them *stedfastness and resolution.*

When they became convinced that God was guiding them in a certain direction, they trod their appointed way without faltering or flinching. "I go," said Paul, "bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem." His friends tried to dissuade him. Prophets foretold that bonds and imprisonment awaited him. But none of these things moved him. He saw God's hand beckoning him, and so he never wavered in his course. He went "bound in the Spirit" to Jerusalem.

(2) And it gave them trustful, quiet and happy hearts. They knew God was leading them. They knew nothing happened to them by chance. They knew their times were in the Father's hands. And so Paul and Silas were able to sing praises to God in prison and at midnight. They were able to accept every dispensation with a cheerful and happy trust, knowing that, since it was of God's ordering, it was bound to work together for good to those that loved Him. Is there anything we need more than this sense of the presence of God and the guidance of God in our lives to-day? Life is broken and harassed and fretful for the lack of it. We talk of *circumstances* far too much—of *God* far too little. We say that circumstances brought us to live where we do; we say circumstances constrained us to enter such and such a trade or profession. But what are circumstances? Who ordered them? "Circumstances," as Phillips Brooks finely said, "are the hands of God." You and I ought, therefore, to say we live where we do by the *will of God*. We are drapers, grocers, merchants,

lawyers, doctors, preachers, by the *will of God.* We occupy our place and do our appointed work, by the *will of God.* To realise that our life—down to its details—is a *plan of God,* will enable us to accept our lot cheerfully, and to do our work bravely. To banish God from our thoughts and to talk about luck and chance is to make life broken, and harassed, and fretful. But to believe that God is in it, from first to last, from beginning to end, is to be able to rejoice alway. And there is no faith we want more; there is no vision we want more. It was given to Paul and these early Christians—may it be also given to us—to believe that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

THE HINDRANCES OF THE SPIRIT

And when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not.—ACTS xvi. 7.

IN the *disappointments* and *frustrated purposes of life* the Divine Spirit may be at work. That is the precise point emphasised in this text. Paul was intent on preaching first in Asia and then, when that door was closed, in Bithynia; and, in both cases, the Spirit suffered him not. Here is the Divine hand recognised in some of the disappointments of life. Now, there are some *hinderings* attributed to the Divine intervention that we can understand. We can understand God's hindering Balaam from carrying out his wicked intention of cursing Israel. We can understand God's hindering Herod from executing his cruel purpose of killing the infant Christ. We can understand God's hindering the Sanhedrin from carrying out their declared resolve of silencing the Christian teachers. We can understand these hinderings. It seems right and proper that God should bring the devices of wicked men to nought. It is in strict accord with what we know of His character.

But this is a case of hindering a *good* work. Paul had fastened on Asia as his next sphere of operations, because it promised such a magnificent

field. There did not seem to be a better preaching place in the world than Ephesus. My deacons have often said to me—and by experience I know that their statement is literally true—that whoever preaches in the pulpit of Richmond Hill Church preaches to more than Bournemouth. He preaches to England; he preaches to the world. And that is what Paul felt about Ephesus. He felt that if he could only preach there he would be preaching to the world. But he was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia." God, that is to say, interfered to thwart his plans. He shut that attractive door in his face. Surely this is the Spirit's strange work—when He interferes to prevent a man from carrying out a purpose so blessed and magnificent as this!

And yet Paul recognises that God's hand is in it all. Even in the *disappointments and frustrated purposes of life* God's hand was at work. It is just here that our faith so often breaks down. We are ready enough to acknowledge God's hand in the blessings and enlarged opportunities of life. But what about life's hindrances, and disappointments, and thwarted plans? For things occur to us which shatter all our cherished hopes and nullify all our plans of service. Take *sickness* as the thing that most easily suggests itself for purposes of illustration. I rather imagine that sickness was the means by which God closed Asia and Bithynia against the apostle. At any rate, it is significant that it is just at this juncture the doctor, Luke, appears at his side. And sickness still comes to

us to upset all our plans and put a stop to all our work. Take the case, for instance, of a missionary ordered home for health reasons. He has a passion for his work and he has been signally blessed in it. Then suddenly he is seized by some illness and is invalided home, and the doctors at home say that on no account must he dream of going back again. It is very hard to accept such a closing of doors as the act of a loving God. It is desperately hard to believe that it is the doing of the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost suffered him not."

Or, to take an illustration nearer still to our everyday lives, there is not a reader of this book who does not know of cases where men have been smitten down in the very midst of their activities. Doors of usefulness have been closed against them. They have been laid aside just when they seemed to be needed most. Think—if I dare allude to so personal a matter—of the eloquent voice that used to sound forth from the Richmond Hill pulpit, doomed now for half a dozen years or more to an enforced silence! How gladly he would preach again! And what mighty things he would accomplish if only he were permitted! It is hard to say of such a case of enforced silence, "He was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word." And yet, what else is to be said? We do not really believe in the living and present God if we only believe that He is in *some* of the events of life. We only really believe in the living God when we believe He is present in *all*. That is the teaching of the Bible. That is the teaching of Jesus. God is over all and

through all and in all. He is in the prohibitions, hindrances, disappointments of life just as truly as He is in its joys and blessings. Indeed, this is the only faith that makes life tolerable. How could we bear up in face of our troubles and disappointments if we had not this belief that God was in them all? Unless we had some sort of trust that even in these things God was thinking upon us for our good, trouble and loss and disappointment would break our hearts. It is because we dimly and falteringly believe that the Spirit of Jesus is at work in these things that we are able to bear up at all.

And what we want in face of the trials life brings to every one of us is a simpler and more vivid faith that God is in the hard as well as the pleasant facts of life. I read some years ago an article about "The Scholar's Melancholy." It was suggested by the tragic death of a great scholar who had found life's anxieties and burdens unsupportable. But you and I ought to be able to write an article in total contrast to that. We ought to be able to write an article on "The Chrsitian's Confidence." And the article ought to tell of a cheerfulness and a hope that no disappointments can break or troubles crush. But to write such an article, and to possess such a confidence, we must be able to put even our thwarted purposes and broken hopes all down to the agency of "the Spirit of Jesus." We must be able to say, like that high priest of old, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." Are we able to say it?

It is the final triumph of faith, and it is the secret of peace. For, to be sure that the "Spirit of Jesus," the compassionate, loving "Spirit of Jesus," is in our very disappointments and losses, is to be quite sure that

> Ill that He blesses is most good,
> All unblest good is ill,
> And all is right that seems most wrong
> If it be His sweet will.

THE THREE TRIBUNALS

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

If you will look carefully at the verses, you will notice Paul refers to three tribunals of judgment: (1) the judgment of a man by society; (2) the judgment of a man by his own conscience; and (3) the judgment of a man by Christ. The two former he rejects as incompetent and unable to pronounce a true and final judgment. The only judgment pronounced upon a man which is absolutely valid and true, is the judgment pronounced upon him by Christ. A man is good or bad, his life has been a success or a failure, his actions are right or wrong, according as they please or displease Christ.

First let us take the *tribunal of Society*. This is the tribunal before which, perhaps, we most often arraign ourselves. We ask "What will people think? What will people say?" Now, I am not prepared to say that the judgment of Society is absolutely devoid of authority, and that we ought to pay no heed to it. But this I will say, and say with all possible emphasis—the judgment of Society is not a complete or true or final judgment. It

is not by the standard or laws of Society that we are to test ourselves. The judgments of Society are so often and so utterly mistaken and false that Paul can here say "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." And for two reasons at least Society is not to be set up as the tribunal: (1) *The standards of Society are purely conventional standards*, and its morality is a purely conventional morality. I mean by that that the judgments of Society do not base themselves on the eternal distinctions between right and wrong. Society is governed by expediencies rather than by principles. It thinks more of etiquette than of ethics. It takes cognisance of crime, but not of sin. (2) And the second reason why Society is not a competent tribunal is this. *It can only judge external behaviour.* But external behaviour is not a true index to a man's real self. Hypocrisy is an ancient sin. All through the ages men have worn a mask in order to deceive. They seem one thing and are another. "Man may smile and smile," says Shakespeare, "and be a villain." The world's judgment of the Pharisee was that he was a pattern of piety—for it noted his scrupulous observance of religious rites, his payment of tithes, his broad phylacteries, his prayers at the corners of the streets. Judged by outward behaviour there never was a more religious man than the Pharisee. He was daubed all over, plastered all over with religion. But the world's judgment of the Pharisee was absolutely and totally false. His religion was all on the outside.

It was all parade and show. It was mere stucco. He was a whited sepulchre, inwardly full of rottenness and all uncleanness.

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's greatest book, "The Scarlet Letter," you will find another illustration of the hopeless incompetence of the judgments of human Society. Hester Prynne, you remember, for her sin was compelled to stand in the pillory with that Scarlet Letter A upon her breast, which proclaimed to the world her deep and bitter shame. And the partner of her sin was the clergyman, Arthur Dimmesdale. But the world never guessed. Arthur Dimmesdale lived in the odour of sanctity. For his learning and eloquence and piety he was the pride of the community to which he ministered —though all the time he knew in his own heart that he ought to be standing in the same pillory with Hester with a Scarlet Letter on his breast too, to declare his sin and shame.

The world can only base its judgment upon external behaviour. But all unknown to the world, and undetected by its scrutiny, there is an inner and hidden life. And it is that hidden and inner life that really settles a man's place and destiny. The heart is the true index to the man. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And, because Society knows nothing of the thoughts and intents of the heart, it is, therefore, an incompetent tribunal. Its judgment can never be accepted as a final and decisive judgment. To be blamed and denounced by the world is no proof of wrong. The world

has consistently blamed and denounced the very best. The "noble army of martyrs" is just an army of witnesses to the world's tragic misjudgments. Which of the prophets has it not slain? Which of the apostles has it not persecuted? It numbered the Son of God amongst the malefactors, and crucified Him between two thieves. To be praised by the world is no proof of goodness. It has praised and belauded men whose wickedness is monstrous and patent. What can you think of the judgment of a Society that rejected Christ and chose Barabbas? Society is not a competent tribunal. Does it blame and criticise you? Think it a very small thing so long as you have the praise of Jesus. Does it praise and flatter you? Do not build upon it unless you know also you are "approved of God."

And the second tribunal of which Paul speaks to you is the *tribunal of Conscience*. Now, the tribunal of Conscience, as compared with the tribunal of Society, is a "higher court." Many a man who has nothing to fear from the judgment of Society, finds himself utterly condemned when Conscience is on the bench. Take Arthur Dimmesdale as an illustration. His flock adored him. The very people who were so merciless in their condemnation of Hester Prynne were full of admiration and reverence for him. According to the judgment of Society he was a saint—but Conscience stripped away all pretence and dissimulation, and branded him as sinner and liar and coward to boot. The judgments of Conscience are

infinitely deeper and truer than the judgments of Society. Indeed, I suppose if we could get a conscience absolutely true, its judgments would be absolutely valid. For Conscience, as Theodore Parker used to say, is just "the voice of God within." And the judgments of a perfectly sensitive conscience would agree with the judgments of God Himself. *But no conscience is absolutely sensitive or true.* Conscience has suffered in the general twist human nature received through sin. In some it has been seared and silenced; in all it has been dulled and blunted, so that the judgments of Conscience can no longer be trusted as absolutely true judgments. Paul had a good conscience; as he says in this text, "I know nothing against myself"; and yet he was not going to put his trust in the verdict of approval pronounced by Conscience. He knew his conscience was no infallible judge. "Yet," he says, "am I not hereby justified, but He that judges me is the Lord."

Now, I believe in bringing every action to the bar of Conscience. But we must beware of thinking that, if Conscience brings no charge against us, we may therefore be satisfied with ourselves. As Principal Edwards puts it in his great commentary on this epistle, "When conscience condemns, God condemns—but the silence of conscience does not imply that God absolves." It is a great thing to have a conscience void of offence, but no one must conclude from that that he is guiltless before God. In a word, if the world's judgment upon a man is faulty and untrustworthy, *so is a man's judgment*

upon himself. For it is man's natural tendency to judge himself leniently, to put all his actions in the most favourable light. He always tries to whittle down and explain away his blunders and folly. He always has excuses to offer for his sin. "The woman tempted me and I did eat," said Adam, and, ever since, mankind has followed his example and found palliations for sin. Conscience is no longer the sharp, severe and inflexible judge. Conscience has been bribed. Conscience has been drugged. And its judgments, as a result, are hesitating and uncertain and confused. Do you remember John Bunyan's account of what happened to Conscience? It is in his "Holy War" that he tells the story. When Diabolus got possession of Mansoul he put the Recorder, whose name was Mr. Conscience, out of place and power. Mr. Recorder, before the town was taken, was a man well read in the laws of his King, and also a man of courage and faithfulness to speak the truth at every occasion. And he had a tongue as bravely hung as he had a head filled with judgment. Diabolus, therefore, feared the Recorder more than any that was left alive in the town of Mansoul, because his words did shake the whole town. Since, therefore, the Giant could not make him wholly his own, what doth he do but studies all that he could to debauch the old gentleman, and, by debauching, to stupefy his mind, and more, harden his heart in the ways of vanity. And as he attempted, so he accomplished his design. And John Bunyan's vivid and picturesque language

tells the exact history of Conscience. Diabolus has debauched and stupefied the Recorder that every man carries in his breast. The debauchery has gone further in some than in others. But not one of us has wholly escaped. Conscience has been dulled and blunted in us all, and therefore is no longer a competent and final tribunal.

There is only one tribunal whose judgment is final and conclusive because perfectly true, and that is the *tribunal of Christ* It is to that judgment-seat Paul made his appeal. "He that judgeth me is the Lord." There are two reasons that make our Lord's judgments final and true: (1) He knows what is in man. He looks behind the outward act to the inner motive. He pierces through the external behaviour to the thoughts and intents of the heart. He is not deceived by appearances—He "looketh upon the heart." (2) Our Lord's faculty of moral judgment is perfect. *Our* capacity for moral judgment, as I said above, has been injured by sin. Conscience has lost some of its accuracy and sensitiveness because of the taint of evil that is present in human nature. But Jesus did no sin neither was guile found in His mouth. In virtue of His sinlessness, He is the perfect judge. This is what makes our Lord's judgments true and His verdicts final—His faculty of judgment is flawless and perfect, for He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. This is the one and only competent and authoritative tribunal—the judgment seat of Christ, "*Ad tribunal tuum, Jesu Christe, appello*"—"to thy tribunal, Jesus Christ, I appeal," said Pascal. To

that tribunal we too must bring ourselves. In the light of Christ we must judge ourselves. The approval of the world counts for nothing; the approval of our own consciences counts for nothing—unless we have also the approval of Christ. This is the final "court of appeal." This is the critical question—does Christ approve and praise? No other praise is worth the having. But if He praises it matters nothing though the world cast us out as it cast Paul out. "He that judgeth me is the Lord."

Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The Master praises—what are men?

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.—JOHN xvii. 3.

"THIS is life eternal—that they should know Thee." This is the one vital knowledge—to know God. Other kinds of knowledge may add to the richness of life, but this is life itself. But if the knowledge of God is thus vital, it becomes all-important that we should know how to acquire it. How shall we find this knowledge of God which Jesus here says is eternal life? We understand how knowledge is to be gained of the great world in which we live, and of its wonderful laws. But it is by other faculties and powers than these physical senses of ours that we enter into possession of this vital knowledge of God. It is just the forgetfulness of this fact that has caused some people to jump to the conclusion that there is no God. The geologist uses his hammer and searches the rocks, and he comes back and says, "I can find no God." The chemist uses his crucible and his balances, and investigates the composition of things, and he says, "I can find no God." The astronomer sweeps the heavens with his telescope; he sees myriads of stars and suns, but he says, "I can see no God." No, of course not. They are looking for Him with the wrong instruments. They

are searching for Him by the wrong method. The telescope and the hammer and the balance may be gateways to the knowledge of the earth, but they are certainly not gateways to the knowledge of God. If men want to attain to this vital knowledge they must use the right method, they must open the right gateway. These things are spiritually discerned.

What then are the gateways to this vital knowledge? Let the Bible itself supply us with the answer. I open my Bible at one of the most familiar of the Psalms, and I find this sentence. "Be still, and know that I am God." Be still and know! Here is quietness leading to knowledge; meditation resulting in assurance. Can we understand anything of this? Can we understand how "being still" will help men to know? I think we can. Let me take a simple illustration. It is one of the delights of my leisure time to read those beautiful nature books that are being written for children nowadays by authors like W. J. Long, Thompson Seton and Richard Kearton. One great lesson I have learned from the reading of these books, and that is this, that if you would learn anything about wild Nature and her ways, you must master the art of quietness. Let a man go tramping through a forest, and all the wild things of the forest will go scurrying away from his path, and will hide themselves until the noise of his tramping has passed. As far as a revelation of its life is concerned the forest will present to the noisy visitor an absolutely blank

page. But let a man enter the solemn woods and sit down there in perfect quietness. Little by little the wild things lose their fear and come out, and the forest begins to reveal to him the wonderful secrets it hides. That is how these writers have acquired their wonderful acquaintance with Nature's ways. They were quiet, and Nature revealed herself to them. That is the gateway to an understanding of the wonderful life of Nature. *Be still and know.*

And that is one gateway to the knowledge of God—*Be still.* We want the quiet and receptive mind. I am not at the moment recommending Quietism as a system. But this much may, at any rate, be said—Madame de Guyon and George Fox gave the world a much-needed witness. God does reveal Himself to the quiet, receptive, still mind. And, perhaps, there is no lesson we more urgently need to learn in these days of ours, for we live in busy and distracting times. Our age is an age of "bustle." In the multiplicity of our activities we are losing our "quiet times." "Scarcely can we turn aside for one brief hour of prayer"; and as a result we are losing our grip of God and our assurance of God. We need to recover our lost times of quiet. Amid the thousand and one cares and distractions of the world, in the stunning tide of its life, God has no chance with us—for His voice is a still, small voice. But when we study to be quiet—when we shut the world out, and with undistracted mind wait upon God, the sense of God will steal upon us, and revelations of God

will be presented to us. We need to cultivate what the Roman Catholics call the habit of Recollection. We need to gather in our thoughts, dispersed as they are over a thousand interests and activities, and concentrate them upon God. "Enter into thine inner chamber," said Jesus, "and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which seeth in secret." What do the inner chamber and the shut door represent but Christ's insistence upon quietness? I do not say that God will reveal Himself to you in startling visions as He did to George Fox, but this I know, if you are familiar with the inner chamber and the shut door you will be in no doubt about God; to you in your quietness God will show His Face. "Be still and *know*."

And here is another sentence—this time from the lips of our Lord, which suggests another gateway to this vital knowledge. "He that doeth the will shall know of the teaching." Practice shall elucidate theory. Experience shall verify theology. *He that doeth the will shall know*. Perhaps this strikes some of you as a case of putting the cart before the horse. Knowing, you say, usually comes before doing, not doing before knowing. You must know first before you can do. Not always; *doing* is often a gateway to *knowing*. As a matter of fact, that is how most of our great advances in mechanics and, let us say, surgery, have been made —not by knowing before doing, but by doing before knowing. If we could watch Edison in his laboratory we should find him busy experimenting. He has a certain aim before him—say the preservation

and reproduction of the tones of the human voice. He does not know how it is going to be done—but he makes experiments, first in this way, then in that, and at last the discovery is made and the phonograph is produced. Edison did not know before he tried, he tried until he knew. I suppose this is true, too, of medical and surgical science. The effect of a certain medicine, the possibility of a certain operation—doctors only discover it by actually trying it. They do—in order that they may know. And similarly, doing is one of the methods of knowing in the spiritual realm. Obedience is a gateway to knowledge. "He that doeth the will shall know."

Indeed, I see no possibility of knowing God in any real, direct and vital way, except by doing His will. Of course, you may know about Him, you may be quite well acquainted with what other people say of Him—without doing His will. There are whole books written on the character and attributes of God, and you could read and study them. But if you learn "Charnock on the Attributes" off by heart, that is not the knowledge of God which is eternal life. You must know Him for yourself. You must know Him to be the kind of God Jesus says He is. And you can only gain that knowledge by *trying*, by doing the will. For instance, there is only one way of being absolutely sure that God answers prayer. What way is that? Trying it. "Pray without ceasing," says the old Book. That is God's declared will. *Do* it, and you shall *know* that God is the Hearer and Answerer of

Prayer. Or take another illustration. God is revealed to us in this Book as One who, in His love for men, gave His only Son to die for them; whose love reaches down to the humblest and most abject; whose power is such that He can save to the uttermost those who come to Him through Christ. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," is His appeal. Now, there is really only one way of *knowing*, of being absolutely sure that God is all this—that He loves you and can save you—and that is by *trying Him*. Do His will; obey His call; look unto Him; confide in Him—and you shall know He is not only the Lover of your soul, but its strong Redeemer also. Obedience is a gateway to knowledge. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Every act of loyalty and allegiance finds its reward in enlarged understanding. "He that doeth the will shall know."

And here is yet one more sentence, this time from the Apostle John, that suggests another gateway through which we may enter upon this vital knowledge. "Every one that loveth," says our beloved apostle, "is begotten of God and knoweth God." Everyone that loveth, knoweth. This, again, controverts a popular belief. "Love is blind," people say. They could not make a greater mistake. Love is vision, love is insight, love is understanding. Unless a man loves—the door to any and every branch of knowledge is closed against him. You will never make a musician out of a boy who has no liking for music.

You will never make an artist out of a boy who has no taste for art. You will never make a scholar out of a boy who has no aptitude for books. Love is the key that opens the doors to every branch of knowledge. You must love art if you are to understand art. You must love music if you are to master music. You must love books if you are to know books. And still more is this the case when we deal, not with things, but with persons. Sympathy is a condition of understanding. John was more completely in sympathy with the Master than any one of the Twelve. With what result? Why, with this result. He knew Jesus as not one of the Twelve knew Him. Read the fourth Gospel. What depth of knowledge it reveals! What wonderful insight into the character of Jesus! John's love is the secret of it. "He that loveth . . . knoweth." And love is the key to the knowledge of God. God is more than power, God is more than wisdom—*God is Love.* And, as our hymn says, "Love only comprehendeth Love." And so it comes to pass that the God who is hidden from the wise and prudent is the familiar Friend of the man of loving and devoted soul.

"THE FRUIT OF THE LIGHT"

Walk as children of light.—EPH. v. 9.

"WALK as children of light!" But, as Dr. Findlay says, "The Apostle's readers might ask, What does this mean? It is poetry; let us have it translated into plain prose. How shall we walk as children of the light? Show us the path." And the Apostle replies to the unspoken question, "The fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

Now "the fruit of the light" is a phrase that tempts a preacher to linger upon it. Some of the old scribes had not imagination enough to see the appropriateness of it—so they altered it to the "fruit of the Spirit." But the Apostle knew what he was about, and the "fruit of the light" is an exquisitely suggestive phrase. As a matter of fact, the glory and beauty of this world of ours are "the fruit of the light." The blush of the rose, the flaming scarlet of the geranium, the vivid yellow of the buttercup, the glory of our autumn foliage—they are all the "fruit of the light." Bring up a rose in a cellar and all you will get will be a colourless, washed out thing. The rose needs the sun to paint its cheeks and perfume its breath. Its colour and its fragrance are the "fruit of the light." I passed through a conservatory the other day in which there was an

orange tree with fruit upon it. And the oranges it bore looked very much the same as those which come to us from abroad. "Are these oranges good to eat?" I said to my host. "No," answered he "they have very little flavour or sweetness about them." "The fact is," he went on to say, "they want sunshine." His gardener had been able to give them heat—heat as great as that of their native land. But they wanted more than heat—they wanted clear, bright sunshine. These the gardener had been unable to supply. So the oranges grew up tasteless and insipid. The sweetness of the orange is "the fruit of the light."

And as it is with flowers and fruit, so it is with man. For the perfecting of his character he needs "light." It is so, as far as his physical life is concerned. I have seen in the newspapers that "light baths" and "sun baths" are recommended as cures for certain ailments. I am not able to tell you how light and sunshine act upon the human body, but it does not need a doctor to tell us that light is essential to health. I read somewhere that some years ago in one of our large towns an institution for the blind was erected. The committee put their wise heads together and decided that, as the building was for the blind, it would be waste of money to go to the expense of many windows. Scientific ventilation and heating were provided, but very few windows, because, as the committee very logically put it, it was of no use in the world providing windows for those who could not use them. In time the asylum was opened and the poor sightless

patients settled within it. But somehow or other, things did not go well with them. They began to sicken one after another; they were restless and unhappy—craving for something, they knew not what. And, after one or two had died, and well-nigh all had been ill, the committee sat on the matter, and someone suggested that what the poor things really wanted was "light." Light! even though they could not see. It seemed absurd; but the committee resolved to make the experiment. They threw windows out of every room and passage, and let the glorious sunshine come flooding in; and the coming of the light scattered not only the darkness and gloom from the building, but banished the restlessness and disquiet from the minds of the inmates, and brought back the glow of health to many a pallid cheek. The patients had been drooping and sickening for lack of "light."

And "light" is just as necessary for moral as for physical health. All moral beauty and dignity is, in truth, the "fruit of the light." This is true of the moral excellences you find in pagan countries. There are great and touching virtues to be found amongst the dwellers in heathen lands. The early Christian Fathers used to speak of the virtues of the heathen as "splendid vices." But, as Dr. Findlay says, Jesus Christ and His apostles never said so. Jesus said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." The fact is, God has not left Himself anywhere without witness. There is the "light which lighteth every man coming into the world." The Spirit of God is at work illuminating

human minds far outside the Christian pale. And the devotion and love and self-sacrifice that you find in pagan lands and amongst heathen peoples are just broken gleams of the light that blazed in its full glory upon the world in the face of Jesus Christ. The fact is, the New Testament writers far surpass us in breadth and sweep of vision. Listen to this from John, "All love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." "All love is of God"—love has its home in heathen hearts even as it has in ours. That love is of God. It is a gleam of the eternal light, and it lends a touch of beauty and charm to lives that are otherwise bare and sordid enough. Wherever you find beauty and glory of character it is everywhere the "fruit of the light." It is the result of the working of the Spirit. I might slightly adapt the words of our familiar hymn and say,

> . . . Every virtue men possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness,
> Are His alone.

And the brighter the light, *the greater the moral beauty*. That is why you find the finest illustrations of the greatness of human character in Christian lands. If I were asked to quote illustrations of the greatness and glory of human character, I would never quote Socrates, great man though he was, with his imperfect moral sense and his easy tolerance for sins and vices which it is a shame even to speak of. And I would never quote Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, with their

philosophy of granite and cold steel. I would quote men like John, the beloved apostle; and Paul, the lion-hearted apostle of the Gentiles; and the holy Francis, "God's Fool," as he was sometimes called; and Savonarola, the Catholic Puritan; and Richard Baxter, the faithful pastor of Kidderminster; and George Herbert, the saintly minister of Bemerton; and David Livingstone, the pioneer of Africa; and Charles Gordon, the Bayard of these modern days; men who combined in themselves strength and gentleness and stainless purity of soul. It is in these men and their like that you see manhood at its best, and they were made by the power in them and upon them of the Lord Jesus. The perfect character is the "fruit of the light."

BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM

Beginning from Jerusalem.—LUKE xxiv. 47.

I. I FIND in this instruction an illustration of the *sanity of Christ*. There is a wise practicalness in this command. For what does it mean? It means just this—begin at home, start work just where you are. Our Lord had always the world in His eye, but He bids his disciples begin by doing the work which lay at their doors.

The principle that underlies this command is as valid for us as it was for the first disciples. The command does not mean that you and I are to begin literally at Jerusalem. But it means that we are to begin our Christian service where these disciples had to begin theirs—in the place where we live and labour. "Beginning at Jerusalem." Shall I tell you what it means for you and me? Well, it means this.

(1) Begin *in your own home*—that is your Jerusalem. If you are parents, begin with your own children. Are you training your children in the way they should go? Do you talk to them? And pray for them? And pray with them? I was at an ordination service not very long ago, and I heard the young minister, in his wonderfully beautiful statement, attribute his very soul, under God, to the example and teaching and prayers of his mother. She had

"begun at Jerusalem," and this young preacher, who promises to do so much in the cause of the Kingdom, was the result. And many of us can say that we, too, are the result of this "Jerusalem ministry." We are what we are, under God, because fathers and mothers began their work for Christ "at home." And what applies to parents and their children, applies also to brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives. Have you any whom you love who are living for self and sin rather than for God? Then, begin by trying to win those for Christ. Young people sometimes come to me wanting to do some Christian work. They want a class in the Sunday School; they want a Visiting District. But is there no work nearer home? "Andrew went first and found his brother Simon." Have you no brother, or sister, who needs finding? That is your *first* duty. "Beginning from Jerusalem."

(2) And it means this—*Begin in your own place of toil.* Your office, your shop, your place of business, whatever it may be, that is your Jerusalem. And it affords you ample opportunities. Have you no fellow-workmen who are ignorant and out of the way? Are there none of your shopmates who are wasting their substance with riotous living? Are there none of your associates in the office who are living without God in the world? Have you ever borne your witness to them? Have you ever sought to evangelize them? You need not look far for your field. It is at your very door. Begin at Jerusalem! I often think Christ's

Kingdom would come far more quickly if only we who are Christians would take advantage of the opportunities that come daily to our hands, and make some honest effort to win those for Christ with whom we are brought in contact by our business and employment.

(3) And it means this further—*Begin in your own town and country.* I trust we shall always be keenly sensitive to the needs of far-off countries. But we need not go to China in order to find ignorance and wretchedness and sin. They are here in England. They are here in our streets and at our very doors. Here in our own midst there are people without God and without hope—who are as pagan in practice as the inhabitants of Central Africa. Here in our own midst we have foul and loathsome idolatries. Here in England men worship, as they did in the wilderness of old, the golden calf. Here in England parents sacrifice their children on the altars of Moloch. Here in England human sacrifices are offered to shameful and unspeakable deities. Here in England people make a god of their belly, and glory in their shame. Look at England, with her religious indifference, with her rotting society, with her hideous vice, with her gambling habits, with her awful appetite for drink! Here is a field for labour! And here Jesus Christ would have you begin! Begin at Jerusalem! That was how they ultimately built the ruined walls of the Holy City long ago; every man built over against his own house. And that is how we shall help to establish the new Jerusalem

upon earth—by every one of us doing loyally and bravely the work that offers itself to our hand.

"Beginning at Jerusalem." It is an illustration of our Lord's sanity, of His large and wise practicalness. "All nations" is the goal at which He would arrive. "Jerusalem"—the home, the work that lies to hand—is the place at which He would begin.

II. "Beginning at Jerusalem"—in this instruction I see an illustration of the *courage of Christ.* We are, perhaps, inclined sometimes to over-emphasise the softer elements in Christ's character to the obscuring of the stronger qualities. We emphasise our Lord's gentleness and tenderness; His pitifulness and kindness. And, indeed, there is wonderful comfort in the thought of the "gentle Jesus." For we, ourselves, are in such sore need of gentle and tender treatment. There are times when we so feel our sin and shame that we should despair but for the fact that we know He is so gentle and kind that a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench. Yes, it is quite true—it is His gentleness that makes us great.

At the same time we must never forget that to the tenderness of a woman Christ united all the courage of the man. He was not only the gentle Jesus; He was also the strong Son of God. He was not only the Lamb—patient, meek, enduring; He was also the Lion of the tribe of Judah—brave, bold and absolutely fearless. I could give you illustration after illustration of the courage of Christ from the Gospels if there were need. Let this one suffice. "He stead-

fastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem." He had just been telling His disciples of what awaited Him there—capture, death, the grave. He knew every item of the terrible trial in store for Him; He foresaw the garden; the traitor's kiss; the buffeting and spitting in the Judgment Hall; the cruel scourging at the hands of the soldiers; the Cross; the thirst; the horror of great darkness. He saw it all, and yet He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. During the Russo-Japanese War we heard much of the combatants in the Far East, especially of the Japanese, who faced wounds and death with almost reckless bravery. But the courage of those soldiers in the East is not to be mentioned in the same breath with the courage of Jesus. They always had the chance of escape; He had none. And if they died—death was not to them what it was to Him. Sometimes I think that in the history of the world only Jesus ever really died. It was He and He alone who tasted the full horror and bitterness of death—because He and He alone bore the burden of the world's sin. And yet, with that awful death before Him, knowing there was no escape from it—he marched like a Conqueror to His Cross. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

And that same courage is suggested by this command. "Begin," says our Lord "at Jerusalem." It was not at Jerusalem a timid man would have begun this mission. For Jerusalem had signalised its bitter enmity by slaying Him on the Cross. Jerusalem had said: "Not this man, but Barabbas." Jerusalem

had cried "Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him, crucify Him!" Jerusalem's hands were still red with His life-blood. Of all places to begin His work Jerusalem seemed the most unlikely. Of all places in the world it seemed the most hopeless and difficult field. And yet our Lord's command reads "Begin at Jerusalem." "Begin by preaching the gospel to my enemies and murderers." When I read this command of our Lord's I am reminded of that saying of Danton's, one of the master-spirits of the French Revolution. "Audacity," he cried, "and yet audacity, and always audacity." Well, there is a splendid and holy audacity about this command of Christ's—"Begin at Jerusalem." Everyone recognised it as audacity. When Peter and John dared to preach Christ in the streets of Jerusalem, and even in the precincts of the Hall of the Sanhedrin itself—it was the magnificent boldness of the act that struck the beholders. And where had Peter and John derived their boldness from? "When they perceived the boldness of Peter and John they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." It was just the courage of Christ they saw in the courage of His disciples. And so, in this little phrase I find the *brave Christ*—the *courageous Christ*. "Begin in Jerusalem," He says. He reckons no place too difficult to capture. To Jesus there are no "impregnable positions." Napoleon, it is said, when he first suggested taking his army across the Alps, had his engineers all against him. "Impossible," they said. "Impos-

sible?" said the Corsican in his own grandiose way, "I have no such word in my dictionary." Well, the word "impossible" is not in Christ's dictionary. He despairs of no country. He abandons no field as too difficult. He bade His first followers begin at Jerusalem. And He bids us, the followers of to-day, advance into the most hazardous and difficult fields in the full confidence of triumph.

LOSS OF TREASURE

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth.
MATT. vi. 19.

THE original and primary contrast of the paragraph from which this verse is taken is the contrast between the perishing treasures of earth and the abiding and eternal treasures of heaven. Our Lord is seeking to save men from that folly which most of them are so prone to commit, the folly of making this world their portion, the folly of living as if this world were all. And He grounds His argument and appeal upon the fact that the joys and pleasures of this world are, in their very nature, *temporary*. We often envy men for their wealth and fame and power. But why should we regard wealth and fame and power as so supremely enviable? There are better things surely than wealth and fame and power! For these things are, by their very nature, fleeting and transient. They cannot and they do not last. Sometimes they do not last even the length of the earthly lifetime of their possessors. It is not long since the newspapers told us one morning that the most famous cricketer in England had died in tragic fashion by his own hand. Arthur Shrewsbury was the hero of many a field; his name had become a household name in England and on the other side of the

world. But he was threatened with an affection of the eyes, and feared that, as a consequence, his old skill with the bat would desert him, and so his popularity would vanish; and for very fear of the loss of his fame and the applause of the public he put a sudden end to his life. About the same time the papers told us of Sybil Sanderson, one of the most famous operatic singers in France. She won the most dazzling triumphs. Applause, flattery, adulation, were heaped and lavished upon her! Paris was at her feet! And yet the papers told us that this woman chose to quit this world in her thirty-eighth year leaving behind her the conviction that all is vanity. But even assuming that these things last all the years of a man's life—even assuming that he enjoys his wealth and retains his power and basks in the applause of men to the very day of his death—yet, at any rate, he has to leave all his wealth and fame and power on this side the grave. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. We part with everything, we say good-bye to everything—*there!*

But treasure in heaven is *lasting and permanent!* The man who is rich in faith and hope and love is eternally rich. The man who puts his trust in Christ and gives his heart to Christ shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end. And our Lord appeals to men—shall I say on the grounds of cold reason and plain prudence?—not to put their money, as the prophet would say, into a bag with holes; not to entrust their wealth to a

bank that was bound to break; but to place their treasure where it should be for ever beyond the reach of detriment and loss. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth consume and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth consume and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Now that, when you think of it, is nothing but plain reason and common sense. Religion *is*, in its truest sense, rational. It is not sentiment—it is sanity. And here our Lord is just appealing to us not to do a hopelessly irrational and foolish thing. You would never dream of investing your money in a concern if you knew that in twenty years, let us say, you would lose every penny of it. Is it not as utterly irrational and indefensible to lay up your treasure on earth when you know that in a few years you will have perforce to surrender every scrap of it, when you know that the earth itself passeth away and the lusts thereof?

"I know Him," says the Christian apostle, "whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day." "That day"—what day is that? It is a day on the further side of death! It is the day when all shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is the great and terrible day of the Lord, and it is a day all flesh shall see. Now are you, who are straining so hard for wealth and fame and power, are you persuaded you can *keep* the things you are striving for? Have you

such confidence in the bank in which, shall I say, you are investing your treasure, that you are quite certain it will stand? These things that make you rich down here—can you keep them? No; there is no keeping them. No one since time began has been able to keep them. I read sometimes in the accounts of the funerals of great persons that on the coffin are placed the helmet, the sword, the orders of the deceased! He is carrying them with him as far as ever he can carry them—to the grave. But he cannot *keep* them! He cannot carry his orders and dignities and decorations into heaven! That is the lesson G. F. Watts would teach us in that picture which hangs in the Tate Gallery, where we see a dead man surrounded by all his gewgaws and fineries, and which bears this legend, "*Sic transit gloria mundi*": "So passeth away the glory of this world." Yes, the glory of the world "passeth away"—it does not "keep"; and the man whose only treasure is earthly treasure awakes to find himself poor and miserable and blind and naked in the great and terrible day of the Lord!

But treasure in Heaven is lasting treasure! The man who has given his heart and his life to Christ, who has set his affections upon things above, is in no fear of losing his riches. "I know Him whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." He is able to "*keep*"! The man who has laid up treasure on earth loses it all when he dies; but the man whose treasure is laid up in Heaven looks forward to an inheritance incorruptible

and undefiled and which fadeth not away. The man who has laid up treasure upon earth leaves behind him all his honours and dignities—but the man who has laid up treasure in Heaven looks forward to the crown of righteousness which the Lord has promised to all who love Christ's appearing.

THE MOTH AND THE RUST

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume.—MATT. vi. 19.

TREASURE may be lost, our Lord suggests, through the moth and the rust. And the moth and the rust may well stand for those more subtle and insidious and secret perils which slowly and silently fret, and sap, and wear away a man's integrity and strength. *Moth* and *rust!*—the conjunction of these two suggests to me the fact that these more secret and insidious perils are two-fold.

What does the *moth* suggest?—the moth that seems so silky and beautiful and innocent as it flits about in the twilight; the moth that seems such a little and harmless thing; the moth which hides and burrows amid furs and garments and household treasures, and which so utterly destroys them that they are fit for nothing but to be burned? It suggests things light as air, seemingly harmless and innocent—thoughts, imaginations, desires—which a man heedlessly admits into his breast and which, being allowed to harbour there, gradually corrupt and consume his moral strength! The moth stands, shall I say, for "little sins"—for those things whose harmfulness seems so slight that they scarcely deserve to be called "sins" at all. And yet I want to say to you that the destruction wrought by

the consuming moth is just as complete and tragic as that wrought by the violence of the thief. A madman might enter into an Eastern house and with axe or hammer smash to atoms the household furniture—but the white ant does the work just as effectively without noise and tumult. And so exactly these "little sins"—these thoughts, desires, imaginations, which work secretly and quietly in the heart, destroy character just as completely as the more violent and obvious temptations. Indeed, I will venture to say most people go more in danger of the moth than of the thief. The obvious menace of great temptations puts us on our guard against them, while the seeming harmlessness of thoughts and desires and imaginations constitutes their deadly peril. Do you want to know the extent of the destruction wrought by the moth? Then read and study that tremendous passage in James's Epistle, in which the apostle traces the natural history of sin. "Every man is tempted," he says, "when he is drawn aside by his own lust and enticed." And what is lust? Lust is just uncontrolled and unregulated desire. Do not attach to the word the almost technical meaning it has come to bear in modern speech. That is all it means in the apostle's statement—uncontrolled desire, a lawless imagination. Could you imagine anything more trivial, and I was going to say innocent, than an uncontrolled desire, a wish, an imagination, cherished for a moment and then dismissed? But now see what, according to the apostle, it issues in. "The lust, when it has conceived, beareth *sin*, and the sin,

when it is full-grown, bringeth forth *death.*" Death is the last term in the series, and death stands for destruction, total and complete. And what is the first term? Lust—the wandering wish—the uncontrolled desire. Death, sin, lust. Lust, sin, death. The lawless desire issues in destruction. "The moth . . . consumes."

And rust! And *rust* suggests pure and sheer neglect. That is how rust comes to be at all—by neglect. Things do not rust that are in constant use. And rust, too, *consumes.* A man may lose his treasure by just neglecting it. This is a truth which science has been enforcing upon us with relentless severity. The condition of retaining a gift is its use. The Nemesis of neglect is loss. The man who allows a talent to rust is deprived of it. Illustrations of this law are familiar enough. Darwin writes in his letters that in process of years he absolutely lost his taste for poetry. Once he had enjoyed it and appreciated it. But his entire devotion to scientific pursuits, his absorption in the task of observing the habits of animals and plants, and his consequent neglect of poetry, brought along with it in course of time a total lack of poetic feeling. I read another remarkable illustration the other day in the case of Bishop Westcott. In his early years Westcott was quite a singer—so much of a singer indeed that a choral performance at Cambridge was postponed in order to have the benefit of his assistance. But in later life, when he became absorbed in his great works on the text of the New Testament, in his professional duties, and latterly in the multi-

farious labours of a great bishopric, time for singing was altogether wanting; he had to neglect this gift, and the result was, his son says, that the Bishop seemed to lose his sense of tune, and if he ventured to join in a hymn, people could never tell what tune he was singing. The talent, as Bushnell says, had become extirpated by disuse. "Rust" . . . had consumed. And it is even so with higher gifts than those of poetry and song. It is just so with those great gifts that constitute a man's deepest treasure—hope, faith, and love. It does not need some fierce and terrible temptation to rob a man of these; it does not need even some secret and insidious sin to destroy them. Neglect will do it. "Rust" will consume. The man who never exercises faith, loses the capacity for faith. The man who never exercises hope, loses the capacity for hope. The man who never exercises love, loses the capacity for love. Neglect is just as destructive as the thief and the moth. "Rust" consumes.

And the special point I want to emphasise and drive home is that of the deadly peril of *moth and rust*. The peril of the more glaring and startling sins is obvious, and men instinctively guard themselves against them. But *moth* and *rust* seem so harmless, and therein lies their special and most deadly danger. Have you noticed how many of our Lord's warnings are directed against the *moth* and the *rust?* He saw men were in danger more from the subtle and the insidious than they were from the obvious and terrible. *Moth* and *rust* destroyed more treasure than the thief. Take his warning against

rust. Turn to the parable of the talents, and what from first to last is that most searching and solemn parable, ending up as it does with the dread sentence "Take therefore the talent from him," but a warning against "rust?" The man lost his talent just because he did not use it. "Rust" consumed. Take that acted parable of the barren fig tree; and what does the doom of perpetual barrenness pronounced upon it mean but that the neglect to bear was punished by the loss of power to bear. "Rust" consumed. Take the picture of the Judgment given in one of the later chapters of Matthew, in which he speaks of a crowd of shuddering men and women ordered to depart into eternal fire. What was their crime? This: "Inasmuch as ye did it *not* to one of these least, ye did it not unto me." Neglect—that was their crime; no positive wickedness or crime—simply neglect. They had neglected to visit the sick, to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry. They had neglected to exercise pity and compassion and love—and pity and compassion and love, the heavenly treasures of the heart, had clean perished of that wicked and deplorable neglect. "Rust" consumed.

And our Lord was equally emphatic in his warnings against the *moth.* He found people on their guard against the more glaring and shameful sins. But He found them careless of evil thoughts and unclean imaginations and sinful desires. They were on the watch against the thief, they were quite regardless of the "moth." And that was Christ's message to his age: "Beware of the moth . . . for the moth

consumes." To an age concerned only with sins of act and deed he preached the mortal peril of the sinful thought and desire and imagination. "Take heed what ye hear," He said. "Beware of the words you listen to." But a word—what so trivial and harmless as a word? No, said our Lord, a word is not harmless. An evil word may become a source of pollution and corruption. What is a word? A "moth." But the "moth"—give it time—consumes. "Out of the heart," He said at another time, "come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings." Notice the word with which that list begins: "evil thoughts." Notice what follows: "murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts." He found people on their guard against the glaring crimes of murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts. But he found them quite careless and heedless about evil thoughts, and yet from evil thoughts all the rest proceed. Beware, says Jesus Christ, of the evil thought. What so harmless as an evil thought? It is here, and then gone. No, says Jesus Christ, an evil thought is not harmless. Lodged in the mind it becomes a centre of contagion. It breeds "Evil thoughts—murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts." What is an "evil thought?" A "moth." But the "moth"—give it time—consumes.

Beware of these seemingly trivial and innocent things; beware of the evil thought, the sinful desire, the unclean imagination. Give them no shelter in your minds. It is with such seemingly innocent

things as these that the ruin of character often begins. These form the " speck within the gathered fruit, that by and by rots all " ; these form " the rift within the lute, which by and by shall make the music mute." There is in every unholy desire, in every unclean thought, power to destroy. The " moth " consumes.

THE NEW WINE

And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins: else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins.

MARK ii. 22.

THIS is a very homely comparison, the point of which has been made clearer for us by the Revised Version's substitution of the word "skins" for the word "bottles." The bottles of the East were, and for the matter of that still are, for the most part made of skins, and chiefly goatskins. But skins get worn by constant attrition and become thin by age. And what our Lord is saying here is this, that when skins have become thus worn and thin they cannot stand the strain put upon them if new wine is poured into them. For the process of fermentation, as we know well enough, generates certain gases, which in turn exercise pressure upon any vessel containing them. An old and worn wine-skin could not resist this pressure, and the result of pouring fermenting wine into an old skin would be that the skin would probably burst, and the wine, consequently, be lost. New wine, if it was to be kept safe, had to be put into new skins —skins with "give" and elasticity, as well as strength in them.

The truth Christ desired to teach by this homely

simile was this—there is a certain force and power in all new life, and it is impossible to confine and fetter it within old forms. You can trim and fit and squeeze dead things into any shape you please. But life is not so amenable. Life has a certain energy and force in itself. You cannot do what you like with it. Any attempt to force life into any special groove or form is likely to end in disaster. Life must be allowed to express itself in its own way, and no surprise must be felt if the new life embodies itself in new forms. Now this principle admits of many applications; but let me confine myself to its application to the *religious life.* There is something ebullient and explosive about the religious life—*when it is really alive.* When the religious vitality is low, people find it not in the least bit difficult to follow prescribed "orders," and worship in stereotyped form. Ritualism gets its chance when religion is asleep or half-dead. "Forms" of godliness seem natural when the power of it is lacking. But "life" spurns forms and makes a mock of rules. When a man becomes full of the Holy Ghost all the religious red-tape in the world will fail to bind him. When the abundant life flows into him, it is impossible to confine him to stereotyped order and ritual. Life is in its very nature spontaneous and free, and new life will always seek to express itself in new forms and methods.

(*a*) Let us remember the truth of this in the matter of *order* and *ritual* and *organisation.* There come periodically upon men great inflows of the Divine life. Do not let us expect that we can force the new

life into the old and stereotyped forms. Let us give the new life its chance to work itself out in its own way. Only disaster results from the attempt to pour the new wine into the old bottles. The history of the Church gives many an illustration of how disastrous the results are. In some cases the new life has been stifled and smothered; in others the Church itself has been rent and torn. The work of Francis and his brothers in Italy was a case of the "new wine" of religious life. Francis and his followers were clean outside the regular activities of the Roman Church. Francis himself was a layman, he and his comrades were not "in orders." But the love of Christ was in their souls, and so they went from place to place, like the apostles of old, preaching the good news of the Kingdom. It was not at all orderly or regular—the new life that was in them scoffed at all stereotyped methods, and adopted new methods of its own. Had Francis's work been allowed to go on its way untrammelled, unfettered, the history of religion might have been different. But Rome laid its hand on the order, regularised it and stereotyped it, and robbed it of its life and power. It poured the new wine into the old bottles. No! the bottles did not burst, but the wine lost all its life and flavour. Rome, in a word, killed the Franciscan revival by forcing it to follow conventional forms and methods.

The coming of the Bible to England resulted in a mighty quickening of religious life. And this new life found itself unable to limit itself

to the conventional ritual of worship. The new life sought expression in new forms. People were moved to engage in extempore prayer; they assembled together for fellowship; they met for what were called "prophesyings." But the people in authority, even the religious people in authority, had clean forgotten this word of the Lord's. They set about trying to pour the new wine into the old bottles. They tried to confine the new religious fervour to the old forms. They passed one Act after another enforcing uniformity of ritual and belief upon the people of England. They filled the prisons with those who refused to conform, they sent many into exile, they sent some to the scaffold. I was at a little church, the other day, which was founded by a young Oxford student who was expelled from the University for engaging in extempore prayer. The action of the authorities was calamitous in its results. There might have been one united Christian Church in the land to this day but for this disastrous attempt to pour the new wine of a quickened faith into the old skins of rigid and stereotyped form. It did not succeed in stifling the new life—but it did result in the rending and tearing of the Church.

The great Evangelical Revival was the direct result of an access of spiritual life. John Wesley and George Whitefield were filled with the "new wine" of the Spirit. And, under the influence of this new and mighty life, they broke through the normal and conventional forms of service. It was

impossible to keep this "new wine" in the old skins. They took to the open air and the fields. Wherever men were willing to listen to them, there they were ready to preach. They instituted fellowship meetings. They erected chapels of their own. They summoned laymen to their aid. The new wine demanded new wine-skins. But again, the ecclesiastical authorities blundered. Had they recognised the principle here laid down by our Lord there would never have been a separate Methodist communion. But, because Wesley and Whitefield refused to be bound and fettered by ecclesiastical convention and form, because, in the exuberance of their new life, they sought new methods of service, they cast them out, and yet another wound was inflicted on Christ's Church in England. Let us learn the lesson. A vigorous religious life needs freedom. You cannot confine it to grooves. You cannot impose rigid and binding rituals upon it. When the great revival broke out in Wales ten years ago, it scattered "orders of service" to the winds. It was of no use trying to conduct the services on the old lines. The new wine demanded the new skins. So let us not look askance at new methods and new forms. New life naturally makes new forms. To attempt to force the new life into the old forms is to run the risk either of stifling the life or rending the Church. Let the new wine find the new wine-skin and both shall be preserved.

(*b*) And let us remember the bearing of this upon the *development of Christian truth.* I believe

that every fresh experience of Christ brings with it an enlarged conception of Christian truth. I believe that it is true of a religion as it is of secular truth that "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns." We must expect the new experience and knowledge, therefore, to express themselves in new forms. I know that nothing is so distressing and disturbing as changes in the statement of Christian truth. It seems to some good and saintly people as if the abandonment of certain statements of truth involved almost the abandonment of the gospel itself. Now I am far from saying that every new statement of Christian doctrine is necessarily true. But, at any rate, it would save us from panic if we recognised that changes of statement are natural and, indeed, inevitable. The gospel abides always the same—but human theologies, *i.e.*, human explanations of that gospel, are sure to alter with growing and expanding knowledge. So let us refrain from making our orthodoxy the test and limit of truth. Let us beware of trying to compel anyone to speak our religious language. Let us impose no shibboleth. Let every man express his religious faith and experience in his own way. And if it sound to us a new and strange way—let us be slow to denounce or condemn. The new wine always seeks a new wine-skin, and the new word may be the expression of some new thing of Christ which the Spirit has revealed to him, and through him to us.

And now I bring what I have to say to an end by adding a word about the application of all this

to the *individual life*. There is no such ferment in the world as that which is caused by the coming of Christ into the individual soul. When that new and Divine life takes possession of a man's heart, it finds expression in new habits, new affections, new ambitions, new pursuits. The new wine demands the new wine-skin. It is simply impossible for a man to receive Christ into his heart and to go on living his old worldly, selfish, sinful life. When a man is in Christ he is a new creature, "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." You cannot put this new wine of an experience of the grace of Christ into the old bottle of a selfish character. The new life is bound to express itself in new conduct. "Lord," said Zacchæus, the miser and the cheat, "the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold"—there you have the new wine finding the new wine-skin. "And not a few of them that practised curious arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all"—there you have the new wine finding the new wine-skin. "Mother," said a youth on his return from a revival meeting, "I have been converted, and I have burned my betting books"—there you have the new wine finding the new wine-skin. Commissioner Tucker of the Salvation Army was once a highly-placed civil servant in India. But the love of Christ got possession of his heart, and at once he was filled with a desire to preach to India's millions. He surrendered position and the prospect

of rank and fame, and gave up his life to save the lost of India—the new wine sought and found the new wine-skin. The new life in the soul expresses itself in new aims, new ideals and new loves. Old habits and desires and lusts are put clean away. What things were once gain to him, these the man now counts loss for Christ. In his heart God takes the place which once the world occupied, and selfishness gives place to love. It is simply impossible for a man to go on living the old worldly life when the love of Christ is in his soul. You cannot put this new wine into the old skin. The incoming of the Spirit of Christ lays the old life in ruins. If a man's Christianity leaves him still selfish and grasping and worldly, his Christianity is simply not the real thing. If there is no difference made to the old skin, it is not the new wine that has been poured into it. Most of us profess to have received Christ. Has the coming of Christ made a difference? Has it necessitated a change? Has it altered our habits, our ambitions, our way of looking at things? Can our neighbours tell that something has happened to us? Has the new wine necessitated the new skin? This is how the case stands—if we can keep the old skin it is because we have not the new wine; if we have the new wine we simply cannot keep the old skin. How does it stand with us? Remember this, the test of Christ's presence in the heart is not profession, but *character*. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

THE ILLUMINATION OF THE SOUL

And when He had spit on his eyes, and laid His hands upon him, He asked him, Seest thou aught? And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking. Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked steadfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly.—MARK viii. 23-25.

IT has been a commonplace of Christian thought and speech to draw an analogy between physical blindness and the spiritual condition in which most men find themselves until Christ touches them into sight. I will not say that by nature we are totally blind. That would be false to experience and false also to the teaching of this old Book. God leaves Himself nowhere without witness. There is a light that lighteth every man coming into the world. Before Christ came, there had been gleams and glimmerings of light. And in pagan lands, where Christ to this day is not known, light is not wholly absent. But at best the light is dim, and men are only able to grope their way painfully after God, if haply they may feel after Him and find Him. And here in our own land I will not say that the people whom Christ has not touched do not see. There is nature and history and conscience, and the stored up Christian sentiment and tradition of centuries, to give them light. But at best they are short-sighted. As Peter says, they only see the

things that are near. As a matter of fact and experience, it is when Christ's hand touches them that most men attain to clear spiritual vision. It is when Christ touches them that they begin to see things in their true proportions; it is when Christ touches them that they see the land of far-stretching distances; it is when Christ touches them that they see the Father.

But the illumination which even Christ bestows is not immediate and complete. It is progressive. And that is the truth which the story of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida so admirably illustrates. The special point about the healing of this blind man was the *gradualness of the cure.* In every other case of the healing of blindness recorded in the gospels, the cure was effected by one act or one word. In this case the man was not healed at once but at *twice.* After spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on them, Jesus asked the blind man if he could see anything. And he looked up and said "I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking." That is to say, he could discern large objects in motion, and though they looked like trees, he concluded that they were men for the simple reason that they were walking about. So once again Jesus laid His hands on his eyes and he looked steadfastly and was restored and saw all things clearly. The commentators make a great deal of the fact that all this is in close accord with scientific discovery and vividly true to life. But I confess it is not its truth to scientific discovery, but the broad fact of the gradual nature of the cure

that interests me. For in this respect the miracle is a *sign*, a parable of the way Christ works in the matter of the *illumination of the soul*.

If one thing is certain it is this, Christ does not bestow full and complete vision all at once. Take it on the broadest platform, to begin with. *What is the Bible?* It is the story of the progressive revelation of God to the human race. But there is a vast difference between the first beginnings of revelation, as we have them in Genesis, let us say, and the full and perfect revelation given to us in the face of Jesus Christ. God spoke to our fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners. He revealed Himself, that verse seems to suggest, in fragments. These patriarchs of our race—they saw God; they were vividly and intensely conscious of Him; but you cannot read the Old Testament books without noticing that they did not see God clearly. They knew He was there, but they did not know of what sort He was. There is much that is partial and therefore mistaken in their ideas about God. But their knowledge grew from more to more until at length it was granted unto men to see the full light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Take it on the narrower platform of the individual life—and there again you will see that it is true that spiritual vision is *progressive*. We do not see everything clearly at the first touch of Christ. The whole teaching of the New Testament insists upon *progression in our apprehension of Christian truth*. When Christ first opens

men's eyes to eternal things—everything does not at once become clear. They see things dimly, darkly, indistinctly. The heights and depths of Christian truth are not revealed to them. The lengths and breadths of God's love are not comprehended by them. Like Paul himself, men press on if so be that they may apprehend that for which also they were apprehended in Christ Jesus.

And what is thus laid down in the New Testament as a matter of principle is illustrated there by what we read of the experience of the saints. Peter had been touched by Christ when he rose up, left all and followed Him; but the Peter who at Christ's mention of the Cross took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid, this shall never be unto Thee," was not a Peter who saw clearly. James and John had been touched by Christ into some dim vision of eternal things when they left their father Zebedee in the boats with the hired servants and gave themselves to the discipleship of Jesus; but the James and John who wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans who refused to receive Christ were not a James and John who saw clearly. The Corinthians who at the preaching of Paul confessed Jesus as Lord in that corrupt and pagan city had had their eyes opened by the touch of Christ to their own sore need and the infinite grace of God; but the Corinthians about whom we read in the Epistles, factious, quarrelsome, drunken, tolerant of gross impurity, were not Corinthians who saw clearly. The light did not break fully all at once.

It grew! The Peter who talks about being redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, saw infinitely more clearly than the Peter who rebuked Christ for thinking of a Cross. The John who wrote, "Little children love one another," was a John who saw infinitely more clearly than the John who wanted to destroy the Samaritans by fire. They had grown in grace and *in knowledge*. And what happened to these New Testament saints happens also to us.

But notice this, as following necessarily from what I have said—a man may have been really *touched of Christ, even though his vision may be vague and dim.* "I see men," said this sufferer, "for I behold them as trees walking." It was a very imperfect and uncertain sight to which men appeared like trees. And yet the man had really experienced the touch of Christ. And so there are men and women whose notions of truth may be very crude and ignorant who yet have come into that direct and immediate contact with Christ which really constitutes the salvation of the soul. What I want to suggest to you is that people may be genuine Christians, saved men and women, whose "views" are all wrong. We need an infinite charity and hopefulness. I know how prone we are to doubt even the Christianity of men who hold imperfect or mistaken views about what we consider to be essential points. And yet if this incident teaches anything it teaches this—that a man's ideas may be sadly astray, and yet he may

have had a genuine experience of Christ. After all, let us remember, it is not the correctness of our views, but our personal experience of Christ that redeems. And so this story ought to teach us the lesson of charity towards others, and patience with ourselves. Do not be disappointed or disheartened if you find that there are mysteries still unsolved, questions still unanswered, depths still unfathomed. All this is in the Divine order. Everything does not become clear all at once. Christ lets us see things as we are able to bear them. He has many things to tell us, but we cannot bear them now. But what we do not know now we shall understand hereafter. Let patience have its perfect work. Spiritual vision is progressive. Things will become clearer to us and we shall become wiser as we patiently sit at Christ's feet. The Spirit will take of the things of Christ and will reveal them unto us.

But while the story teaches the truth that spiritual illumination is gradual, it also brings us the assurance that Christ will not abandon His work *till the vision has become perfect.* Christ is no dealer in half-finished jobs. When He begins, He also makes an end. He was not content to leave this man in that condition of uncertain and imperfect sight when men appeared to him as trees walking. He touched his eyes again and he was restored and saw all things clearly. And this is just a parable of what Christ will do for the soul. Before He has finished His work upon us, we too shall see clearly! That is a beautiful verse in the Book of Proverbs, "The path of the just is as the

light of dawn which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Like "the light of dawn!" And you have, perhaps, watched the "light of dawn." You have seen it first touch the hills, while the valleys lay shrouded in darkness and night, and then gradually creep down the hill-side, sweeping the night before it, until at length it has invaded every nook and cranny and filled everything with sunshine and brightness. The path of the just shall be like that—it shall lead him out into fuller and fuller light until at length it issues in the "perfect day." Perfect day! The abolition of every shred of darkness and night! What a blessed prospect that is to look forward to! Our Lord will not leave us for ever in the twilight with only a groping and uncertain knowledge. He will bring us into the "perfect day." This is the great word with which we may comfort ourselves in the midst of the perplexities and uncertainties of our present condition—"Now we see in a mirror darkly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known." In the end, like this sufferer, we shall see "all things clearly."

CHRISTIANITY AND PATRIOTISM

But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city.—Acts xxi. 39.

It has been often asserted that Christianity is inimical to *patriotism*. The genius of Christianity, we are told, is not national, but cosmopolitan. Its tendency is to delete boundaries and to obliterate distinctions. It inculcates not so much love of a land or of a race, as love of the world. To the Christian, some one has said, there are no foreign countries. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is no male and female, but all are one in Christ Jesus. And this cosmopolitanism of Christianity, people say, is absolutely fatal to patriotism in the familiar and everyday sense of the term. That is, for instance, the main criticism the Japanese pass upon Christianity. Patriotism amongst the Japanese has become exalted almost into a religion. Devotion to their land and their Emperor is the dominant passion amongst them. And one of their objections to Christianity is this—they maintain that its cosmopolitanism, its universalism, is fatal to patriotism, and that its adoption would inevitably sap and disintegrate that sacrificial love of country which has, up to now, been the Jap's boast and pride.

Now, let us look at this criticism for a moment to

see how much truth there is in it. For if it could be shown that Christianity is anti-patriotic, it would fail in its appeal to the Englishman just as surely as it would in its appeal to the Jap; for love of one's land is not a passion that exists only amongst the dwellers in that Eastern Empire, it is a passion which burns with an undying flame in the hearts of us all.

That Christianity is cosmopolitan in its spirit admits neither of question nor dispute. Its gospel is for the world. It addresses itself to man as man. Pre-Christian religions were for the most part tribal or national religions and their gods were tribal or national gods. But the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of all the earth, and the Father of all who dwell upon it. This gospel of ours ignores all national distinctions. It is just as much for the Eastern as the Western; it is just as much for the black man as the white man. It speaks of a love that lavishes itself upon all without respect to differences of race or colour and tongue. It preaches a universal Fatherhood—and consequent upon the universal Fatherhood, *a universal brotherhood* as well. The gospel not only ignores natural and racial differences, but it also looks forward to a time when these national and racial differences shall cease to sunder and divide men as they do to-day. I do not say that the gospel looks forward to a time when they shall cease *to exist*. Difference in itself is not an evil; it adds to the richness and fulness of life. The differences will still exist, but they shall cease to *divide*, they shall cease to be sources of jealousy and strife. The world shall become a

united world; men shall be bound to one another by the common love they bear to Christ. That is the glowing and entrancing vision that the prophets and seers of this Holy Book saw at the end of the days. They saw the vision of a united world. The most inveterate enmities are to be abolished—the lion is to lie down with the lamb, the calf, the young lion and the fatling together; racial jealousies are to disappear—Judah is no longer to vex Ephraim nor Ephraim Judah; war and bloodshed are to cease—men are to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks and to learn war no more. And all the nations of the world are to be dwellers in the one Holy City, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from God. No, there can be no mistake about it, the New Testament is cosmopolitan in its message, in its spirit, in its outlook, in its aim.

But there is no man who thinks seriously who is not a *cosmopolitan* in the New Testament sense. We can all of us see that many of the miseries and distresses of our present social state spring directly from national jealousies and rivalries. Take that one matter of the burden of armaments as an illustration. That burden is growing heavier and more crushing every year. War, or rather the fear of war, is bleeding the nations. Who is there, who thinks at all, who cannot see that the dissipation of all jealousy and suspicion as between us and Germany, would bring untold relief, and would add immeasurably to the happiness of both nations? We can all of us see that the abolition of these

animosities that now scare the world would multiply the world's prosperity and joy. We can all of us see that it is only a united world that can really be a happy world. And so our poets continually hark back to the vision of this Book. Burns dreams of the day when

> man to man, the world o'er,
> Shall brothers be for a' that.

And Longfellow sings of a time of which it shall be said,

> Buried was the bloody hatchet,
> Buried was the dreadful war-club,
> Buried were all war-like weapons,
> And the war cry was forgotten.
> There was peace among the nations.

While our own Tennyson, fierce and vehement patriot though he was, thinks of the Golden Age as a time when

> The war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd.
> In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

But it is only by a curious error of judgment that cosmopolitanism of this kind—New Testament cosmopolitanism—can be construed as being inimical to *patriotism*. The blunder is due to an entirely false conception of what patriotism is. What is patriotism? My dictionary defines it as "love of country, devotion to the welfare of one's country; the passion which inspires one to serve one's country." I am content with the definition. Patriotism, you will notice, is a *positive* thing. It

is love of one's country, the passion which inspires one to serve one's country. It is not hatred of foreign countries; *it is the love of your own.* Now, the mistake so many people make is that of interpreting patriotism as if it meant hatred and jealousy of other nations instead of the devoted service of their own. That is what the ancient Greek did; the stranger was *ipso facto* an enemy. That is what the Jew did; his fierce patriotism showed itself in bitter scorn for Gentile dogs. And that is the form much of our modern patriotism takes still. There is more hate than love in it. It shows itself more in contempt for our neighbours than in honest effort to save England. But that is not a true patriotism. It is a pinchbeck patriotism, a bastard patriotism, a false patriotism, and we need to pray to God to be delivered from it, for the passage is easy from hate to insult, and from insult to all the horrors of bloody war. Patriotism does not mean hatred of other countries; it means love of England, devotion to the welfare of England. And it is possible, surely, to love England, to be devoted to the welfare of England without hating the rest of the world. It is possible to be at once a cosmopolitan and a patriot. Let me illustrate what I mean by the relations between man and woman. It is possible, surely, for a man to pay chivalrous respect and honour to all women, while giving a special place in his affections to one. Indeed, I will go further and say, it is the man who has a holy and sacred passion for one woman in his heart who is most likely to give to every other woman the courtesy and honour which are her due.

His love for the one will teach him respect for all. And so exactly it is with love of country. There is no place like England to us, there ought to be no place like England to us.

> Our fathers' sepulchres are here,
> And here our kindred dwell,
> Our children too! How should we love
> Another land so well?

But we can love England without hating the rest of the world. We can love England and yet wish well to every other nation under the sun. We can love England and yet desire to see other nations prosper and flourish. Indeed, the more we love England, the kindlier we ought to feel towards every other Fatherland. What England is to us ought to help us to understand what France is to the Frenchman, and Germany to the German, and the United States to the American, and so our very love for England ought to teach us a chivalrous respect for and appreciation of the feeling of those who belong to other nationalities than our own. Patriotism is not the foe of cosmopolitanism. On the contrary, the love of our land ought to lead us out into a love that embraces the world.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.—ACTS vii. 60.

"LAY not this sin to their charge," prayed the dying martyr—i.e., to the charge of the people who were committing the crime. But if not to *their* charge then to *whose?* The prayer raises the whole question of human responsibility, and it suggests that others besides the actual perpetrators may have to share in the blame for a sin.

Now, in discussing the question of sin and responsibility, I want to start with the truth of *personal responsibility.*

This is axiomatic in the Bible. The old Book brushes aside all excuses and sophistries and insists upon it that every sin is a man's own. "Every man shall give account of himself unto God." Every man must bear his own burden whatsoever it be. Men have always been ready enough to invent excuses for themselves and to throw the blame for their wrongdoing upon somebody else. For instance, in Ezekiel's time men were in the habit of laying the blame of their sin upon their fathers. As we should put it, in modern speech, they blamed *heredity.* This became so popular an excuse that it passed into a proverb. They said "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." But against that popular and

comforting doctrine the prophet lifted up his voice in stern and uncompromising protest. "As I live, saith the Lord God," he cried, "ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine, *the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" No man can get rid of the blame of his own sin. No man can transfer it on to other shoulders. The actual sinner, in the last resort, must bear the responsibility and the pain. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die,"

I say this is axiomatic in the Bible. Upon this point its witness is emphatic and unvarying. And it bases personal responsibility for sin upon this other truth, that *man is free.* The Bible holds no terms with the doctrine which represents man as the helpless puppet and plaything of forces over which he has no control. The Bible declares that man is vested with the regal power of will; that he has the faculty of choice; that no man can be driven into sin or evil except by his own consent. You remember Tennyson's lines about man and fortune:

> "Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
> With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
> Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.
> Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
> Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
> For man is man, and master of his fate.

That is not simply Tennyson's view, that is the Bible view also. "Man is man, and master of his fate." And just because he is "master of his fate," just because no one and nothing on earth can con-

strain him into sin, every sin that he commits is his own, and he himself, and no other, must bear its penalty and blame.

Now, time has not in the slightest degree invalidated this truth of *personal responsibility*. Every system of law and government in the world proceeds on the supposition that every man's sin is his own. In fact, it is not too much to say that it is this doctrine of personal responsibility which forms the very foundation of moral government and makes our world an ethical world. If a man is not free, and therefore not responsible, you reduce the cosmos on the instant into a chaos, and what we call "law" and "order" become themselves ghastly tyrannies and wrongs. It is perfectly true that, in these days we are seeing far more clearly than our fathers saw that responsibility is not perhaps the simple thing they thought it to be. We are making far greater allowances for the influence of heredity and environment. And yet, attach what importance you may to heredity and environment, the truth of *personal responsibility* remains, in the last resort, unassailed and unassailable. Every man knows that even an inherited evil tendency can be mastered, and an adverse environment can be overcome. So that, in our inmost souls we know that we ourselves and we alone are to blame. You remember how all this is illustrated in the story of Herod. When he gave the order to kill John the Baptist I have no doubt he made excuses for himself. He tried to persuade himself it was not his fault. He put the

blame on Herodias, on Salome, on the unfortunate circumstances in which he found himself placed. But when the news of Jesus reached him and he imagined Jesus was John come to life again, in that moment of emotion and deadly fear he blurted out the naked truth—" John, whom I beheaded, he is risen from the dead." " Whom *I* beheaded." There was no talk then of Herodias or Salome, or the chief captains of Galilee. He knew the crime was his own. He could have prevented it had he wished. He, and he alone, was to blame. And in our heart of hearts we all of us make the same acknowledgment. If we sin—it is our own fault. We may make what excuses we like, we may advance what specious arguments we please, our hearts brush them contemptuously and ruthlessly aside, and ratify and confirm past equivocation and dispute, this primary, basal truth of *personal responsibility*.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.—ACTS vii. 60.

AND yet, after all, to say that the sinner is himself to blame does not exhaust the question of responsibility, does it? The great and striking characteristic of our age is the development of the sense of *solidarity*. We realize to-day as, perhaps, never before, that man is more than an *individual*, that he is a *social being* bound by innumerable ties to other men and women, and influenced by them in all manner of subtle and powerful ways. No man lives to himself; we are all bound up together in the bundle of life. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member rejoices, all the members rejoice with it. No man can live a pure and brave life without lifting the entire race to a higher level; no man can live a life of sin without involving the entire race in the results of his wrongdoing.

This conception of *solidarity*, of the vital connection of every individual, not only with the living members of his family and city and nation, but also with the innumerable dead as well, is one of the dominating ideas of our time. And, of course, it profoundly affects our ideas about responsibility. We talk to-day not simply of Individual Responsibility, we talk also of Corporate

Responsibility and of a Social Conscience. We are beginning to see that it is possible that some others beside the actual sinner may have to bear a share of the responsibility for the sin. I say we are recognising this aspect of the truth to-day. Indeed, as I have already stated, we are in danger of exaggerating it and pushing it to the falsehood of extremes by the over-emphasis we place upon Heredity and Environment. Still, *corporate responsibility* is a solemn truth we do well to recognise. We are our brother's keepers. We are bound to look not simply on our own things, but every man on the things of others. And it may be that, if we sanction conditions that make it hard to do right and easy to do wrong, God may lay some of the blame for the sins and crimes we deplore in others to our charge.

Let me illustrate what I mean by referring to one of G. W. Cable's stories. One of the prettiest and most pathetic stories Mr. Cable ever wrote was the story which he entitled "Madame Delphine." It is a story of the Southern States of America, and it centres around the colour question. In those States it is considered an outrageous thing if a white man marries a girl, however beautiful and refined she may be, who has the slightest trace of negro blood in her veins. Now Madame Delphine had a trace of negro blood in her, though no one could have told it from her appearance. And she had a beautiful daughter in whom all her hopes were bound up. A young white fell in love with this beautiful girl, not knowing

there was in her any trace of negro descent. And the story tells how the mother was driven to lying and deceit in order to make possible the marriage between her daughter and her lover. But the deceit was a burden to her and the lying was a torment. She poured forth her trouble to the priest, and this was what the priest said when he heard the pitiful story: "Lord, lay not this sin to her charge." Now, was this poor woman responsible for her sin? Yes, undoubtedly. But not alone. Would not God hold the whole of the Southern Society which sanctioned and upheld the wicked and unjust law which drove her to sin partly responsible as well? Now that is an illustration from a story. Let me now illustrate its working in our own practical everyday life.

Let me illustrate, to begin with, on the national scale, in the matter of this country's relations with foreign people. Englishmen have penetrated to every quarter of the globe. In every land men of our race are to be found. Englishmen have always been adventurers, discoverers, pioneers. Now let us humbly thank God that to us as a nation has been given the privilege of carrying the gospel into the far corners of the earth, and of winning fresh territories for the Empire of Christ. But every reader knows that the influence of England and Englishmen has not always been beneficent and uplifting. We have given these lands we have entered other things besides the gospel. Think of China. We have our missionaries in China. Yes, but we also forced our opium upon China. Now,

opium, as everyone knows, is a deadly poison. It ruins men, body and soul. It is more fatal in its effects than is drink. China is awake to the havoc it is making, and, in the interests of the people, would fain put an end to the traffic. But, in the interests of trade, England still forces this deadly stuff upon her. Now I want to know who is responsible for the homes that are ruined and the souls that are damned through this traffic? You say the victims themselves. Yes, but not they alone. I tell you, God will not lay this sin wholly to the charge of those poor wretches in China. God will lay it also to the charge of the people of England because, for greed of gain, they persisted in what the greatest statesman of our day called "a morally indefensible traffic."

You remember the Old Testament story of the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom, and how the people worshipped the golden calves that Jeroboam made at Dan and Bethel. The people themselves, by their idolatry, sinned against the majesty of God, and had a sore punishment to bear. But the responsibility for the apostasy was not so much at the door of those who worshipped the calves, as of the king who set them up for worship. That is the sentence that recurs again and again after Jeroboam's name—Jeroboam the son of Nebat, "*which made Israel to sin.*" And in so far as England, by unjust action as in China, or by evil example in many another land, is tempting weaker folk to sin, this land, too, will have to share in the responsibility and the blame.

But let us bring our thoughts back to things nearer home. What about our own English society? Do we not tolerate conditions in England here, which make it easy to do wrong and almost impossible to do right? Think for instance of the case of the dwellers in the crowded tenements of the slums. I am not forgetting that there has been an awakening of the public conscience upon this matter, and that things are better than they were. And yet they remain indescribably bad. Of thousands and tens of thousands of little children, it is still true, to use General Booth's phrase, that they are not so much born as *damned* into the world. Born into one-room tenements in mean streets where six, seven, eight, human beings live huddled all together, born into dens of filth and vice, born the offspring of sin and shame, accustomed from infancy to hear the obscene jest and the coarse blasphemy, and to witness scenes of brutal debauchery and lust, how can such children grow up pure and clean and good? What chance have they? No. I am not forgetting that a flower may grow out of a dung-hill, and that in a slum a man may wear the white flower of a blameless life. But all the same, the conditions under which multitudes of our brothers and sisters live do not give them fair play, do not give them a fighting chance. And God will not lay the entire blame for the wreckage at the doors of the dwellers in the slum; He will lay some at our doors for allowing these impossible conditions to exist. It is our fault that men are crowded together in hovels not fit for swine; it is our fault that the gin-shop is

planted at every corner, to rob people of their money, to ruin their health, to muddle their brains and destroy their souls. These things we can prevent. We have the power to make them impossible. We can remove these stumblingblocks from our brother's way. If we neglect to do it, and sit idle and indifferent by, we shall have to share in the responsibility for the ruin of souls. God will lay their sin in part to our charge.

Think once again of the case of the over-worked and the underpaid. I am not going to fling indiscriminate charges about against our business men. Many of them—I would fain believe the majority of them—are honourable men, and try to do the fair and just thing by those who are in their employ. But the sweater is by no means extinct. Fair wages are not paid for work done. I remember reading not very long ago a harrowing story about a poor girl who supported with her needle her orphan brother and sisters. One week because of a slight flaw in her work, a considerable part of her hard earned pittance was stopped. It brought despair to her heart as she thought of the hungry little ones at home dependent upon her. And another way of making up the money thrust itself upon her. To save those little ones she sinned. When she poured out her heartbreaking story into the ears of a sympathetic lady, she said " Let God Almighty judge who's to blame most, I that was driven or them that drove me to the pass I'm in." Yes, and God Almighty surely will judge, " For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord."

And the responsibility for that girl's fate is set down not simply to the account of the poor sinner herself, but also to the account of that employer, who by his oppression and injustice drove her to it. And if such cruel things are still being done in our midst. the responsibility may extend even to us. No, of course, we do not personally oppress or defraud or grind the faces of the poor—but if we allow conditions to exist which make this possible, God will not hold us as guiltless. If, having the power to stop it, through indifference and sheer thoughtlessness, we allow injustice and wrong to flourish, God will lay some of the responsibility for the wreckage that results to our charge.

Now let me illustrate the truth in another way, and show that it has a still more direct and personal application. It was almost a habit with us some years ago to scoff at the doctrine of *original sin.* We were inclined to laugh at it as a theological fiction and I will admit that in some of its aspects, it was very little more. Original *guilt* does not commend itself to our common sense or our belief in eternal justice. But in these days we are realizing the truth of *original sin* in a way we have never realized it before. The scientific doctrine of heredity is simply a re-statement in present day language of the old Bible doctrine of original sin. What is the teaching of doctors and scientists to-day but an enforcement in exact and technical language of the truth contained in such a word as this, " The Lord visiteth the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children to the third and the

fourth generation." We are learning to-day that failings, weaknesses, and diseases, have a tendency to transmit themselves from parent to child. We have known for long enough that physical weakness is so transmitted. We say of certain fell diseases, *consumption*, for instance, that it "runs in the family." But we realize in these days that moral characteristics transmit themselves as well. The "inherited burden" is a terrible and tragic fact in the history of many a child. You remember the old Greek legend says that the mighty hero Achilles was only vulnerable in his heel, and that was where his mother Thetis held him. And many a child is vulnerable where the sin of his father or mother grips him. That is the weak spot. It was by an arrow in his heel that Achilles at length was killed. It is often by means of the inherited weakness that the devil gets the better of men to-day. I want to know if a man falls, and falls for that reason who will be to blame? The old doctrine of original sin taught that children shared in the guilt of their parents. The modern doctrine reverses all that, and teaches that parents may have to bear some share of responsibility for the sins of the children. If a child is maimed and weakened by the sins of his parents, and he falls in the fight, God will not lay his defeat entirely to his charge, He will lay part of it to the charge of the parents whose sin sent him forth crippled and helpless.

There stands the solemn truth—written large over the face of human life—we share in the responsibility for other's sin. In so far as we make it easy to do

wrong and hard to do right; in so far as we, as citizens, allow conditions to exist which are productive of vice and crime; in so far as we by our weakness and sin injure others and cause them to fall, so far are we responsible and God will lay the sin in part to our charge. And when I think of all this, I begin to feel that one of the most urgent needs of our time is that of a development and quickening of the *social conscience*. Evil is wrought in these days of ours, for want of thought as well as for want of heart. That is why gigantic wrongs are allowed to flourish in England, and to go on taking their toll of lives and souls, because we have not realized that these things were any part of our business. But they *are* our business. We are members one of another. We are our brother's keepers. Instead of judging those who fall, let us judge this rather, that no one put a stumblingblock (or allow one to be put) in a brother's way, or an occasion of falling. I believe that the sense of corporate responsibility issuing in a quickened social conscience will speedily sweep England clean of her ghastly social ills. We should make straight paths for the feet of our weaker brothers and sisters, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed.

THE TRUE ALMS-GIVING

Howbeit give for alms those things which are within: and behold, all things are clean unto you.—LUKE xi. 41.

WE are all too apt to identify alms-giving with money-giving. That identification results in a two-fold practical mistake.

First, it makes men imagine that the only people in need of alms are those who are monetarily poor. But "the needy" and "the poor" are not synonymous terms. It is not alone in slum streets and humble tenements that those may be found who need our alms. Poverty is not the only or the worst affliction. In many a wealthy home there are aching hearts, because there is sorrow, anxiety, disappointment, fear. They do not need our money, but they need alms of "those things that are within." Secondly, it makes men imagine that the only people who can give alms are those who are monetarily rich. It shuts out, that is to say, the majority of Christian people from the exercise of this Christian grace. For still not many great, or rich, or noble are called.

If alms-giving is confined to money-giving, then the privilege of it belongs to the few. But it is not. "As poor," says the apostle Paul about himself, "yet making many rich." Paul had no wealth! He earned enough at his trade of tent

making to keep body and soul together and that was all. And yet what an alms-giver he was! He made many rich. There were people all the way from Jerusalem to Rome who said they owed everything to Paul. Women like Eunice and Lydia and Damaris; men like the Philippian gaoler, and Sosthenes of Corinth, and Onesimus the run-away thief! Not that Paul had given them money. Some of them did not need money, and in any case Paul had none to give. But he gave them something better than money, something whose price was above rubies. He bestowed upon them spiritual gifts. He gave alms of "those things which were within." "As poor, yet making many rich." And so still, the best alms-giving is within the reach of the humblest of us. Though poor, we can, like the apostle, make many rich. We can do more than minister to their physical comfort, we can minister to their spiritual well-being. And we can do that without silver or gold, by giving for alms "those things which are within."

Now, in what has been already said, I have given you some inkling of what I understand by "those things which are within." "I long," says St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, "to impart unto you some spiritual gift." That was something better than money. And these "spiritual gifts" which it is in the power of the poorest to bestow, represent the truest and most beneficent alms-giving. But perhaps in order to make the idea quite clear, I may proceed to define it and analyse it a little more closely still.

Take our English word "charity." It is a word that in the course of the centuries has had its meaning impoverished. It is like a coin which has lost weight. It is like a flower that has lost its fragrance. What does charity stand for to-day? It stands for the copper you fling to a beggar. And that is why we have such an organization as the "Charity Organization Society." It is easy enough to organize money doles, and material gifts. The whole thing is mechanical and external. But what did "charity" mean before its impoverishment and debasement set in? It meant love. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, and the greatest of these is charity." It did not mean in those days your money doles; it stood for the affection of the heart. It was no external and mechanical thing that you could organize. It was one of those precious "things that are within." That was what "charity" meant in the old days, not the giving of a sixpence, but the giving of your heart. And this is one of those "things which are within," in which the true alms-giving still consists. "Give," says Jesus, "more than your money, give your love." That was what our Lord Himself gave. I believe that, out of the common purse which Judas bore, money was now and again given to the poor and the distressed, but it could not have been much, for quite obviously Jesus had not much to give. It was not money Christ gave, but love. He lavished love abroad. He found Zacchæus in misery and wretchedness. It was not money the little man wanted. He was rolling in money. It was

love Zacchæus wanted. For in spite of his wealth Zacchæus was despised, hated, scorned by all about him. And to this poor, lonely, desolate soul Jesus came and offered His love. "Zacchæus," He said, "make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."

There was that woman who was a sinner in the city. It was not money she wanted. She was bedecked with jewels and fine gold, the proceeds of her unholy trade. But she ached for love—the love of some pure and holy soul. In spite of her jewels and gay apparel she carried within her breast a broken heart. She was an outcast, a social pariah, a castaway. And to that abased and stricken soul Jesus came and offered His compassionate love. "Daughter," He said, "thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." And love made a new man out of Zacchæus and turned the woman who was a sinner into a saint. He loved them, as the prophet puts it, out of the pit. He gave for alms "those things which were within."

And that same gift of love is ours to bestow still. And there is no gift more sorely needed. Poverty is not the world's bitterest pain, and money is not its sorest need. I look abroad and I see men and women with lonely, stricken, burdened souls. Money, even if you had it, would not help them. But I will tell you what will help and heal them! Love will help them. Love will heal them. Love will save them. You can love people still out of the pit of heart-break and despair and shame. If you want to help the world, to comfort the world, to

redeem the world, you must give something better and costlier than money. You must give your heart! You must give alms of "those things which are within."

And here is another of the "things that are within" that you can give for alms, the gift of *hope and courage.* You remember the familiar story of the healing of the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple. His friends carried him daily to that spot that he might ask alms of them that entered into the temple. When he saw Peter and John coming he stretched out his hand and made the usual appeal. Then Peter, fastening his eyes on him, said, Look on us. The man did so—making sure some gift was about to come. And so there was—but not the sort of gift he expected. "Silver and gold have I none," said Peter; from that point of view he was as poor as, or poorer than, the lame man himself; "but what I have that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." What did Peter give the lame man? Not money, but hope; not gold, but faith; he put courage into his soul that made it possible for Christ's mighty power to work upon him. It was not money from his pocket Peter gave; he gave alms of "those things which were within." Other people gave their money out of pity for his crippled condition. Peter did more, he breathed such courage and faith into him as enabled him to stand on his own feet. And while it is a good thing to minister to the broken and the crippled, it is an infinitely better thing to help the crippled to stand erect, and the

broken to be brave and self-reliant men once more. And this great miracle may be accomplished by us, but not by means of money, but by the giving for alms those costlier gifts that are within.

That again was what Jesus did. He gave men something infinitely better than money. He gave them courage and hope. Take the case of Peter himself. Peter—or Simon, to give him his original name—was naturally one of the most impulsive and unstable of men ; a man full of good intentions, but of unsteady will. That was Simon's reproach and shame and despair—his weakness and vacillation. But do you remember the first word Jesus spoke to Simon when he was brought to Him by his brother Andrew? Here it is, "Thou art Simon" —weak, vacillating, unstable — "thou shalt be called Peter"—the rock. He said to Simon in effect: "You shall win the victory over that besetting sin of yours. You shall become as strong and stable and sure as the rock." He breathed hope and courage into Simon. He rescued him from despair and made a new man of him. He saved him by imparting His own faith to him. He gave alms of "those things which were within."

And this is a kind of alms-giving we need still to practise. It is a good thing to help people in their misery and distress, but it is a better thing so to cheer and hearten them that they shall lift themselves above it. And for this better ministry we must give "the things that are within." Money is not the only thing or the best thing to give to the

people who are down and have lost heart. Give them hope, and courage, and new faith. Speak a word of cheer to them. Be an encourager. I think it is in connection with the late Lord Shaftesbury that the story is told of a man who, having begun badly by committing a theft and being put in prison, attributed his recovery and subsequent prosperity to the action of the good earl. The man went to see him after his release, and he came back to his friends with glistening eye and shining face. "Why," said his friends, "did he give you something?" "No," said the man, "but he took my hand in his and said 'Cheer up! By the grace of God you will be a good man yet.'" It was not money, it was courage and hope the good earl gave. He gave alms of "the things that were within." And the world is full of men and women who are down and have lost heart. There are men and women who have lost heart about themselves. They come to me sometimes—they tell me they feel it is of no use fighting against their passions and besetting sins. Do you ever try to help such men and women? Do you ever try to set their feet upon a rock and establish their goings? Money will not do it! You must breathe hope and courage into them. You must give for alms "those things that are within."

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